TULASIDASA : HIS MIND AND ART

Advisory Committee

Prof. T. G. Mainkar

Prof. H. L. Sharmā

Prof. R. S. Sharmā

Prof. V. P. Singh

TULASIDASA : HIS MIND AND ART

Editor
Dr. Nagendra

NATIONAL

NATIONAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
(Prop. K. L. Malik & Sons Pvt. Ltd.)
23, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002 (India)

First Published : 1977

Printed in India at Saraswati Printing Press, Maujpur, Delhi-110153 and published for the Prop. K. L. Malik & Sons Pvt. Ltd. by National Publishing House, 23, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002.

Foreword

Tulasîdāsa has had a pervading influence on the life and thought of the Indian people, not only in the Hindi speaking region but far beyond it. The various facets of Tulasî's thought—social, economic, cultural and religious—need careful analysis in order to assess the nature of his impact on succeeding generations. It is difficult to encapsulate a seminal figure such as Tulasîdāsa into being either a progressive or a reactionary. Since Tulasîdāsa lived and worked in an age of rapid change in which many old and new ideas were contending against each other, it should not be surprising for us to find contradictory tenets in his writings. Nevertheless, Tulasîdāsa emerges as a man of composite vision who tried to resolve the often contradictory ideas prevalent in his age, rising above narrow dogmas and sectarian beliefs, and as a man who was fundamentally a humanist in his approach.

There has been a growing interest in India and outside in the lives and thoughts of those who have shaped Indian ethos. Dr. Nagēndra, who is himself a well known critic, has done valuable work in bringing together in English the writings of eminent critics and scholars on Tulasîdāsa. I hope that people in different regions in India as well as those outside India, interested in the development of Indian thought and society, would find this anthology useful.

University Grants Commission
New Delhi

SATÎSH CHANDRA

Editor's Note

A few years ago, when I was placed in charge of the Academic Section of the National Committee for the *Rāma-charitamānasa* Quatercentenary Celebrations, I had drawn up a scheme to project the poetic achievements of Tulasîdāsa to the world around through English and some other major languages. For several reasons that scheme fell through, but I did not give up the idea of bringing out at least one volume on the 'Mind and Art of Tulasîdāsa' in English. An opportunity was provided last year by the University Grants Commission when my proposal in this behalf was readily accepted by its Standing Committee and I was requested to edit this anthology which is now before you.

I have tried to cover almost all the major aspects and present a fairly complete appraisal of Tulasîdāsa's literary genius. Besides the contributions of authors who wrote originally in English, I have also included the translations of four Hindi articles by scholars who are recognised authorities on the subject. Prof. A. Bārānnikōv's article has been rendered into English from the Hindi version of his classical introduction to the Russian translation of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. The list of contributors ranges from scholars of the earlier generation like Dr. Grierson, Prof. Bārānnikōv and Āchārya Rāmchandra Shukla to some of the brilliant young writers in Hindi today. The presentation of some typically Indian concepts of art and philosophy in English has posed a problem before the writers as well as the editor, but an attempt has been made to put them across in a readable style.

I have always felt that we have not made serious efforts to exploit the medium of English and other international languages to 'sell' our treasures in the literary world outside, with the result that even our best classics, ancient as well as modern, have not been assessed properly. It was time that, with our growing cultural and literary contacts with the developed countries of the world, we had undertaken a regular planned programme. If this modest attempt of mine creates further interest in this direction, my purpose would be served.

The reader may find a little inconsistency in the use of diacritical marks in the book. This is, however, deliberate and not without a logical basis. In transliterating the derived (tadbhava) words, words of common Hindi speech, and Hindi names with their set spellings, we have consciously deviated from the standard code of diacritical marks, because in these cases the use of the marks meant for Sanskrit, as they are, may create confusion. The English translators of Tulasîdāsa, such as Atkins and Allchin, have also followed the same pattern.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sense of gratitude to Professor Satîsh Chandra, Chairman U.G.C., and the members of the Standing Committee on the *Rāmacharitamānasa* for the opportunity they have offered me of giving shape to the idea I had cherished long in my mind.

University of Delhi **Nagendra**

Contents

Foreword		v
Editor's Note		vii

Introduction

1. Tulasîdāsa : The Great Poet of Medieval India	*The Late Dr. Sir George Grierson*	1
2. Tulasîdāsa : His Mind and Art	*The Late Prof. A. Bārānnikōv*	6

The Man and His Times

3. The Age of Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. Banārasî Prasād Saksēnā*	29
4. Biographical Sketch	*The Late Prof. Mātā Prasād Gupta*	63
5. Works of Tulasîdāsa : A Chronological Survey	*Dr. Vishwanāth Misra*	94

Mind and Art

6. Philosophy of Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. R.C. Pānḍēy*	103
7. Theology of Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. R.K. Dāsgupta*	117
8. Tulasî's Concept of Bhakti	*Prof. R.K. Tripāṭhî*	125
9. Ethics of Tulasîdāsa	*Dr. Rāmdatt Bhārdwāj*	140

10	Cultural Values in Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. N.K. Dēvarāja*	153
11.	Social Consciousness in Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. Ramēsh Kuntal Mēgh*	159
12.	Social Life and Concepts as Reflected in the Works of Tulasîdāsa	*Dr. (Mrs.) Sāvitrî Chandra Shōbhā*	169
13.	Tulasîdāsa's Conception of Rāma	*Prof. U.B. Singh*	185
14.	Emotive Appeal in Tulasîdāsa	*The Late Āchārya Rām Chandra Shukla*	196
15.	Principal Sentiment in the Rāmacharitamānasa	*Prof. Nagēndra*	219
16.	Epic Element in the Rāmacharitamānasa	*Dr. Shambhunāth Singh*	226
17.	Language of Tulasîdāsa	*Prof. Vidyā Niwās Mishra*	245
18.	Rhetoric Devices in the Rāmacharitamānasa	*Prof. Ravîndra Nāth Srîvāstava*	251
19.	Poetic Principles of Tulasîdāsa	*Dr. Nirmalā Jain*	273
20.	Tulasîdāsa as a World Poet	*Prof. R.C. Prasād*	281
21.	Relevance of Tulasîdāsa to the Modern Age	*Prof. Nagēndra*	300
	Index		311

I

Tulasîdāsa—The Great Poet of Medieval India

THE LATE DR. SIR GEORGE GRIERSON

We now come to the greatest star in the firmament of medieval Indian poetry, Tulasîdāsa, the author of the well-known vernacular *Rāmāyaṇa* which competes in authority with the Sanskrit work of Vālmîki.

The importance of Tulasîdāsa in the history of India cannot be overrated. Putting the literary merits of his work out of the question, the fact of its universal acceptance by all classes, from Bhāgalpur to the Punjāb and from the Himālaya to the Narmadā, is surely worthy of note. "The book is in every one's hands, from the court to the cottage, and is read or heard and appreciated alike by every class of the Hindû community, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old." It has been interwoven into the life, character, and speech of the Hindû population for more than three hundred years, and is not only loved and admired by them for its poetic beauty, but is reverenced by them as their scriptures. It is the Bible of a hundred millions of people, and is looked upon by them as much inspired as the Bible is considered inspired by the English clergyman. Pandits may talk of the Vedas and of the Upaniṣads, and a few may

ever study them; others may say they pin their faith on the Purāṇas : but to the vast majority of the people of Hindustān, learned and unlearned alike, their sole norm of conduct is the so-called *Tulasî-krit Rāmāyaṇa.* It is indeed fortunate for Hindustān that this is so, for it has saved the country from the tāntric obscenities of Shaivism. Rāmānanda was the original saviour of Upper India from the fate which has befallen Bengāl, but Tulasîdāsa was the great apostle who carried his doctrine east and west and made it an abiding faith.

The religion he preached was a simple and sublime one, —a perfect faith in the name of God. But what is most remarkable in it, in an age of immorality, when the bonds of Hindû society were loosened and the Moghul empire being consolidated, was its stern morality in every sense of the word. Tulasî was the great preacher of one's duty towards one's neighbour. Vālmîki praised Bharata's sense of duty, Lachhamana's brotherly affection, and Sîtā's wifely devotion, but Tulasî taught them as an example.

So, too, in an age of licence no book can be purer in tone than his *Rāmāyaṇa.* He himself justly exclaims,—"Here are no prurient and seductive stories, like snails, frogs, and scum on the pure water of Rāma's legend, and therefore the lustful crow and the greedy crane, if they do come, are disappointed." Other Vaiṣṇava writers, who inculcated the worship of Krishṇa, too often debased their muse to a harlotry to attract their hearers; but Tulasîdāsa had a nobler trust in his countrymen, and that trust has been amply rewarded.

His most famous work is the *Rāmacharitamānasa,* which he commenced to write in Ajōdhyā on Tuesday, the 9th Chaitra, Sambata 1631 (A.D. 1574-75). It is often incorrectly called the *Rāmāyaṇa,* or the *Tulasî-krit Rāmāyaṇa,* or (alluding to its metre) the *Chaupāî Rāmāyaṇa,* but according to the forty-fourth *Chaupāî* of the *Bāl Kānda* of the poem, the above is its full and proper name. Two copies of this work are said to have existed in the poet's own handwriting. One of them, which was kept at Rājāpur, has disappeared, all but the second book. The legend is that the whole copy which existed was stolen, and that the thief being pursued flung the manuscript into the river Jamunā, whence only the second book was rescued. I have

photographs of ten pages of this copy, and the marks of water are evident. The other copy exists in Malîhābād, of which only one leaf is missing. I am in possession of an accurate literatim copy of so much of the Rājāpur manuscript as exists. I have also a printed copy of the poem carefully compared with, and corrected from a manuscript in the possession of the Mahārājā of Banāras, which was written in Sambat 1704 (A.D. 1647), or only about twenty-four years after the author's death.

Regarding Tulasîdāsa's style, he was a master of all varieties, from the simplest flowing narration to the most complex emblematic verses. He wrote always in the old Baiswāṛî dialect, and, once the peculiarities of this are mastered, his *Rāmacharitamānasa* is delightful and easy reading. In his *Gîtābalî* and *Kabitābalî* he is more involved, but still readable with pleasure; in his *Dōhābalî* he is sententious; and in his *Sat Saî* difficult and obscure.

Regarding his poetic powers I think it is difficult to speak too highly. His characters live and move with all the dignity of heroic age. Dasharatha, the man of noble resolves which fate had doomed to be unfruitful; Rāma, of lofty and unbending rectitude, well contrasted with his loving but impetuous brother Lachhamana; Sîtā, the perfect woman nobly planned, and Rābaṇa, like Dasharatha, predestined to failure, but fighting with all his demon force against his fate, almost like Satan in Milton's epic, the protagonist of half the poem,—all these are as vividly before my mind's eye as I write as any character in the whole range of English literature. Then what a tender devotion there is in Bharata's character, which by its sheer truth overcomes the false schemes of his mother Kaikēyî and her maid. His villains, too, are not one black picture. Each has his own character, and none is without his redeeming virtue.

For sustained and varied dramatic interest I suppose the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is his best work; but there are fine passages in his other poems. What can be more charming than the description of Rāma's babyhood and boyhood in the commencement of *Gîtābalî*, or the dainty touches of colour given to the conversation of the village women as they watch Rāma, Lachhamana and Sîtā treading their dreary way during their exile. Again, what mastery of words is there in the *Sundara Kānda* of the

Kabitābalî throughout the description of the burning of Lankā. We can hear the crackling of the flames and the crash of the falling houses, the turmoil and confusion amongst the men, and the cries of the helpless women as they shriek for water.

Still even Tulasîdāsa was not able to rise altogether superior to the dense cloud which fashion has imposed upon Indian poetry. I must confess that his battle descriptions are often luridly repulsive, and sometimes overstep the border which separates the tragic from the ludicrous. To native minds these are the finest passages which he has written; but I do not think that the cultivated European can ever find much pleasure in them. He was hampered, too, by the necessity of representing Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, which leads him into what, although only meet adoration to the pious believer, sounds to us *Mlēchchhas* as too gross hyperbole.

The reasons for the excellence of this great poet's work are not far to seek. The most important of all was the great modesty of the man. The preface to the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is one of the most remarkable portions of the book. Kālidāsa may begin his *Raghuvansha* with a comparison of himself to a dwarf, and of his powers over language to a skiff on the boundless ocean; but from under this modest statement there gleams a consciousness of his own superiority. His modesty is evidently a mock one, and the poet is really saying to himself all the time, "I shall soon show my readers how learned I am, and what a command I have over all the nine *rasas*." But (and this is another reason for his superiority) Tulasî never wrote a line in which he did not himself believe heart and soul. He was full of his theme, the glory and love of his master; and so immeasurably above him did that glory and that love seem, that he was full of humility with regard to himself. As he expresses it : 'My intellect is beggarly, while my ambition is imperial. May good people all pardon my presumption and listen to my childish babbling as a father and mother delight to hear the lisping prattle of their little one.' Kālidāsa took Rāma as a peg on which to hang his graceful verses; but Tulasîdāsa wove wreaths of imperishable fragrance, and humbly laid them at the feet of the god whom he adored. One other point I would urge, which has, I believe,

escaped the notice of even native students of our author. He is perhaps the only great Indian poet who took his similes direct from the book of Nature and not from his predecessors. He was so close an observer of concrete things, that many of his truest and simplest passages are unintelligible to his commentators, who were nothing but learned men, and who went through the beautiful world around them with eyes blinded by their books. Shakespeare, we know, spoke of the white generation of the willow leaves in the water, and thus puzzled all his editors who said in their wisdom that willow leaves were green. It was, I think, Charles Lamb who thought of going to the river and seeing if Shakespeare was right, and who thereby swept away a cloud of proposed emendations. So, too, it has been reserved for Mr. Growse to point out that Tulasîdāsa knew far more about Nature than his commentators do.

2

Tulasîdāsa : His Mind and Art

THE LATE PROF. P. A. BĀRĀNNIKŌV

Tulasî is not a founder or a follower of any philosophical system ; he is primarily a devotee. No doubt, the thoughts and beliefs of a devotee are based on a philosophical system, but it is the difference between the theoretical and practical aspects of a philosophy that helps to distinguish between a philosopher and a devotee. In this connection the critics have raised the question of dualism, monism and specified monism. They have also raised the problem of the *Saguṇa* (Personified God) and the *Nirguṇa* (Absolute God), which is actually based on the difference in the media—knowledge and devotion and their relative significance. The conclusions drawn by Tulasî regarding the relationship of the Creator, the Individual Soul and the Creation are based on knowledge, and the devotee in Tulasî accepts them too, though there is some difficulty in the appreciation of such views. As a philosopher, Tulasî attains the level of monism on the basis of knowledge and logic. At the highest level of truth, the ultimate reality is of Brahman who is without birth, non-dual and free from all attributes. He is "beyond knowledge, beyond expression, without birth, and free from illusion, sense perception and attributes." The *jîva* (or individual soul) is a part of the Supreme Being, and is, therefore, indestructible, sentient, pure and full of happiness.

The illusion of the seeming world is false and deceptive.

> "See, Listen, Think in your own mind,
> The Ultimate reality is not in attachment."

It is only after the dawn of real wisdom that one comes to know that Māyā (Illusion) is deceptive. Similarly, the world, as it is seen, is deceptive like the impression of silver in an oyster shell or like the mirage. If the only real existence is of Brahman, and nothing besides Him exists, then the worldly distinctions (born of Illusion) like happiness-sorrow, heaven-hell, real-unreal, virtue-vice are also unreal and without substance. The true state of knowledge, therefore, is the state of non-duality when such distinctions are not noticed and the differences and anomalies vanish automatically. In the true state of knowledge these disparities should not be perceptible. Therefore, the consciousness of distinctions betrays lack of true knowledge :

> "O listen, illusion creates distinctions many,
> The knowledgeable do not notice these, and those
> who do are groping in the dark."

As a philosopher Tulasîdāsa supports monism while discussing knowledge, but Tulasîdāsa the devotee is fully aware that this state of non-duality, though acceptable, cannot be achieved without efforts. At the practical level the consciousness of distinction persists in some form or other before the devotee attains the state of non-duality. He knows that mere knowledge is not sufficient and that one cannot get anything merely by means of the knowledge about it. As long as the state of true realisation is not achieved and the spiritual training is not complete, the consciousness of duality, however false, shall linger on due to the very nature of things. At the practical level it results in a feeling of distinction between the devotee and the Lord, the subject and the object. Thus, in spite of the fact that there is no disparity between the basic concepts of the philosopher and the devotee, some differences do creep in. The philosopher's Absolute God, who is free from all desires or attributes, has to assume form and qualities in order to provide a tangible basis for the love of the devotee.

"The absolute God, without qualities and form, unseen
and unborn,
Assumes a personality and a form for the love of the
devotee."

Similarly, though in essence the individual soul is identical with Brahman, yet the devotee feels that the sentient soul has fallen a prey to Māyā or Illusion. This state of affairs is false, yet in practice it appers to be real.

"There is a knot between the conscious and the inert,
Though false, yet it is difficult to resolve."

The nature of Māyā or Illusion is also very much alike. Its creation is like a dream—unreal and yet painful :

"The universe is thus under God's control,
Is a source of misery, though unreal all."

In this way, at the level of devotional practices, the Absolute Brahman has to assume a personality, and the obsession of the soul by Māyā or Illusion has to be admitted. However, unreal its existence may be, Illusion creates a chasm between God and soul. In spite of a clear acceptance of monism, the *Rāmacharitamānasa* reveals a duality in the treatment of the problem, which is really based on the difference between the ideal and the practical, and is motivated by the different requirements of the philosopher and the devotee. Tulasîdāsa does not seem to follow any particular school of philosophy deliberately because he wants to cover within the framework of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* the different requirements and processes of the philosopher and the devotee. The model before the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is *Shrîmadbhāgawata* from which it has drawn substantial material, and like the *Bhāgawata*, it does not have a well-defined philosophical system. But both are clear on the exposition and relative merit of devotion.

The main difference between the philosopher and the devotee is based on the difference between the modus operandi of their spiritual performance. This is illustrated by the dialogue between Kākabhushundi and Saint Lōmash, and the metaphor of *gyanadîpa* and *bhaktichintāmaṇi*. The learned depend on logic while the devotees on realisation. The devotee

does not ignore knowledge, but he is not satisfied with knowledge alone ; he wants to experience the phenomenon in his heart. In *Vinayapatrikā* the poet has put forward succinctly that mere discourse or mere knowledge will not result in the deliverance from Illusion, as mere talk about a lamp will not dispel darkness in the home.

> "The gift of the gab will not help one cross the worldly ocean,
> As talking of a lamp in the night doesn't drive darkness away."

Similarly, if we talk about food, it will not satisfy our hunger. The real satisfaction is felt by those who actually eat—without a comment, without a word :

> "Various delicacies described at length, day and night,
> Will not yield pleasure as given by the actual bite."

The devotee is of the latter type ; though he does not say anything, he gets the satisfaction. Kākabhushunḍi does not accept the Absolute concept propounded by Saint Lōmash because his spiritual hunger is not satisfied. Whomsoever he asked, he was told that 'He manifests himself everywhere,' but this failed to satisfy him :

> "Whichever Saint I ask, says : God is manifested in all objects ;
> But the abstract concept of Godhood does not satisfy me,
> I love more the Personalised God !"

The devotee does not lay much store by theoretical statements about knowledge because he insists on action and experience. He fails to attach much importance to knowledge also because it is "difficult to express, difficult to understand and difficult to practise rationally." Tulasîdāsa has described the complexity of knowledge and simplicity of devotion in such a manner that there is no need to add anything further to it. The devotee does not adopt the path of knowledge because it is sure to leave some traces of egoism in him, and egoism and pride are the worst enemies of a devotee. That is why, instead of taking pride in his duty or capacity, he depends upon resignation, complete submission and divine grace which lead to the path of

devotion. The very first sentence in the devotional treatises of Nārada and Shāṇḍilya makes it clear that a man owes nothing to his own effort but everything to divine grace which dispels ignorance :

> "Thus the world is dependent on God and although false in essence, causes great afflictions ;
> It is Rāma O Pārvatî ! whose mercy dispels all illusions."

Knowledge also dawns on man through divine grace because nobody can appreciate the secret of his glory without his mercy. On knowing Brahman he becomes Brahman himself :

> "Only he attains knowledge who is blessed by You,
> And on knowing Thee he is identified with You."

The poet has laid special emphasis on devotion because, according to him, knowledge is dependent on salvation, whereas the path of devotion is independent. Deliverance is the ultimate goal of knowledge, but the devotee attains it as a matter of course, although he neither strives nor does he crave for it :

> "Salvation comes of its own to the devotee of Rāma although he does not crave for it ;
> Thus thinking the devotees opt for devotion ignoring salvation."

It is as a devotee, therefore, that Tulasî interprets the character of Rāma. In a nutshell, his principle is "submission to Rāma." Devotion, which makes a distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped, is the means, and the goal is the peace of mind which can be achieved only through God's grace.

Thus, although well versed in philosophy, Tulasîdāsa is not a philosopher in essence. He wrote the *Mānasa* not to propound a system of philosophy, but to propagate the efficacy of devotion to Rāma. His target was not philosophy or knowledge, but devotion. It was, however, merely not due to his personal inclination that Tulasî laid greater emphasis on devotion than on knowledge, rather it was the need of his times—of the social environment. The principle of devotion has its roots in philosophy but it has its social aspect too.

The social aspect of devotion becomes clear with the help

of its two major principles. Every saint and scholar has declared that in the field of religion all are equal, that all have a right to devotion, and that the rich and the poor are all equal in the eyes of God ; nobody is too high or too low. Rāma accepts only the relationship of devotion : "He admits the bonds of devotion only." Even a high birth without devotion is as futile as a cloud without vapours. This saying is very popular among the devotees : "None will question your caste or creed, you devote yourself to God and you belong to Him." This principle of devotion tried to level up the differences in the social set-up. Along with the propagation of the principle of equality, there is severe criticism of jealousy in the works of Tulasîdāsa. Mutual jealousy among the gods of the various sects was considered as much contemptible as jealousy among men. The Vaiṣṇava cult of devotion considers it unpardonable to have ill feelings against any god or goddess. Tulasî himself shows reverence to both Shiva and Rāma. Service to Shiva will beget perpetual devotion to Rāma.

Thus, these two principles of the Devotional Cult served a great purpose. The principle of equality reduced the social differences and the propagation of tolerance towards all religions helped in broadening the religious outlook and strengthening social cohesion. While accepting the revised version of the medieval Vaiṣṇava cult, Tulasî kept social solidarity in mind. He criticised many sects popular in those days because they tried to retard the growth of social harmony and thereby make society weak. In fact, Tulasí always had society in his mind.

The Devotional Movement is born out of the social and cultural needs of the Middle Ages. By placing more emphasis on devotion rather than on knowledge, the saints of the Devotional Cult wanted to re-establish those social values which had been shaken at their very roots due to the extremist views of certain philosophical systems, especially of Monism. According to Monism, all the differences and distinctions of society and of the world become unreal and insignificant. In that state distinctions of good and evil, heaven and hell, philanthropy and atrocity become meaningless and hollow. Monism treated the torturer and the tortured on an equal plane. No one can torture nor can one be tortured. Such monism could be the

goal of individual aspiration, but it cannot be the general norm and ideal of a society; were it so, society would stop functioning. For the proper functioning of society, it is imperative to define the bounds of the do's and the don'ts—what ought to be done and what must not be done. If society is to flourish well, the good must be rewarded and the evil punished, even if they are considered equal spiritually. Devotion, as propagated by Tulasî, laid stress on simple, easy and pure conduct and this indirectly helped in the elevation of social standards, and also tried to put a stop to the social chaos and indiscipline born out of the rampant licence of bloated erudition. And this is the social dimension of the Devotional Movement.

The basis of Hindû society is the acceptance of caste system. While describing *Kaliyuga*, Tulasîdāsa gives a clear account of the chaos and indiscipline rampant in the Hindû society of the Middle Ages. In this context he describes the way Shûdras had become self-styled authorities on the ways of God and criticised the Brāhmaṇas. The poet considers this as socially presumptuous :

"The shûdras join issue with the Brāhmaṇas
We are in no way inferior to you,
One who knows God is a Brāhmaṇa !
And thus cast an angry glance at them."

Similarly, the poet complains that the wicked and the cunning claim to be saints :

"Fond of others' women, extremely cunning, wrapped in lust, hatred and selfishness—
Such are known to be saintly and wise ;
This is the nature of Kaliyuga."

In these words the poet describes the social ills resulting from Monism and states that such wrong notions create social indiscipline and render the society weak. For a better cohesion of society, the poet lays greater stress on devotion rather than on knowledge. Even the individual aspect of devotion, building up of character and personality, contributes to the strengthening of the basis of society. Tulasî has described the ways and means of devotion through Rāma—while discussing the nine-fold

Devotion. Man's personal duty in consonance with the scriptures covers the social aspect also. The main sources of inspiration for the devotee are continuous realisation of the ephemeral nature of the world, feeling of helplessness, single-minded dedication, and noble living. Worthlessness of the world warns them that pomp and show, luxury and brutal force are all columns of smoke. All expectations from this world or from the creatures of this world are therefore bound to end in disappointment. Even the so-called gods are not self-sufficient; they have to depend on others. It is strange that they are called the 'friends of the poor' when they themselves are poor. "There is no other friend of the poor than Rāma because all others, if I were to place before them my miserable plight, are poor themselves." Such an outlook brings fearlessness and strength of character. Such a person cannot be obsessed by fear or greed, nor can all the treasures of the world dazzle his eyes. The feeling of helplessness leads to true humility and modesty and saves the devotee from his worst enemies, viz., pride and egoism. Freedom from pride and egoism initiates the devotee into what Tulasîdāsa calls 'true and proper living'. Single-minded dedication engenders a feeling of firm faith in the devotee, so that he can pass through the most difficult tests. He concentrates on God, so that the fickleness of his mind vanishes and he stops looking for help elsewhere. "What should be said of a person," says Rāma, "who claims to be my devotee and yet looks on man for help ?"

Cuculus (Chātaka) is the symbol of single-minded love and Bharata of single-minded devotion. The ways and means of devotion help in building up a personality which, along with modesty, is characterised by firmness and fearlessness. The devotee is not shaken by fear, nor can he be won over by greed; he is free from "enmity, feud, hope or fear and does not leave his righteous goal even amid decisive trials." The devotee's life thus becomes an ideal life.

Tulasîdāsa carries this argument further till the personal aspect of devotion assumes a social character. In many places he says that the best deed is non-violent and good to others, and the worst sin is to inflict pain on others. In refraining from inflicting pain and doing good to others lies social welfare.

"Doing good to others is the highest duty,
And inflicting pain on others is the worst of sin."

Just as non-violence and service to others are social virtues similarly the prescribed qualities of a saint and the characteristics of noble living have their social dimensions. The life of a saint becomes an ideal of moral life which helps in the uplift of society. While defining the meaning and scope of devotion, the duties of man are also defined. Human body is considered to be a gift of God—it is a rare attainment and should be directed towards high morals and saved from sensual indulgence. Those who inflict pain on others, even after attaining a human form, are damned. Both the *Mānasa* and *Vinaya-patrikā* sing encomiums to human body. It is the basis of all devotional practices, a means of deliverance. It is a matter of rare fortune that God has benevolently blessed us with a human body. By the grace of God all of us are endowed with a human form. It is given not to be wasted away in sensual indulgence. It is a ferry to cross the ocean of this world, and God's grace is the favourable wind. It should, therefore, be directed towards noble endeavours, of which service to humanity is the highest goal.

The ideal way of life, envisaged by the poet for himself, has a positive social basis. Along with the sublimation of his own personality, he talks of the welfare of others—and of society as a whole : "Through thoughts, deeds, and words, I shall do good to others." In fact, the cult of devotion gave a new character to the community—modest but firm, fearless and unshakable in faith, unimpressed by the pomp and show of the world and well-contented in its poverty because it served a God who was fond of the poor. It was this shield of devotion which, during the hard times of the Middle Ages, helped the Hindû community to protest its ancient religion and culture. It was not shattered by the suppression of the rulers nor did it submit to greed. Through devotion the people could safeguard their personality against the might of the oppressor. The community was in bondage, but its spirit was free.

In the sphere of religion Tulasîdāsa has discussed the hierarchy of gods and goddesses and made a special effort to effect a compromise between the cults of Shiva and Viṣṇu.

Besides other gods, there are ample references in the *Mānasa* to the Triad. Among them Brahmā is the least important whereas Shiva and Viṣṇu are shown as friendly to each other. Devotion is possible only through service to Shiva. Rāma clearly says that he does not like the critics of Shiva :

"If Shiva's critic is called a follower mine
To me he does not appeal even in dream."

It may be argued by some that this religious compromise was motivated by political considerations. It is with a view to establishing a rapport between the Shaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites that Tulasîdāsa usually represents Shiva as the highest deity. But, in reality, this attempt at harmony did not have a political overtone : it only denoted the liberality of the Vaiṣṇava cult which did not have any prejudice against other gods.

The highest place in the *Mānasa* is given to Rāma. Though he is described as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, he is greater than Viṣṇu; he is a Power Supreme who can make "Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Shiva dance." He is a manifestation of the Absolute Brahman. In fact, there is no distinction between Rāma and the Absolute Brahman : both are the same. Rāma enters into birth "in order to destroy the evil and protect the good." It is the love of the devotees that compels Rāma to enter into birth—"For the sake of the devotees the Supreme God Rāma assumes the human form of a king." All are born out of Rāma and are ultimately absorbed in Him. After Rāvaṇa's death his spirit is absorbed in Rāma. Thus everything springs from the Supreme Being and then goes back to Him. This absorption or complete merger is salvation. The devotee does not, however, crave for salvation because for devotion duality is essential. "The devotees of the Personalised God do not long for salvation." There are beautiful descriptions of the childhood of Rāma and Krishṇa found in abundance in Vaiṣṇava poetry. They are so unique and marvellous that the like of them are not found anywhere else—neither among simple tribes nor among the most developed religious sects.

Belief in the transmigration of souls is a typical feature of Hindû religion. The theory of action is the foundation or motivation of this belief, and the highest aspiration of a Hindû

is to become free from the cycle of rebirth. In this cycle of creation, countless creatures wander through myriads of births depending on their actions. Among these creatures only man has the potentiality of becoming free from the whirlpool of illusion—through knowledge if he chooses a difficult path, or through the simple path of devotion. The final achievement of man is to be the recipient of love of God : and God has graciously given him the human body only for this purpose. He can justify his existence by philanthropy and devotion and not by indulgence in sensual pleasures. Thus, devotion to Rāma is, according to Tulasîdāsa, the highest goal of man.

Tulasî, a staunch believer in social hierarchy, supported the caste system. Still he has incorporated in his philosophy the humanistic trends of the contemporary Vaiṣṇava cult and asserted again and again that Rāma accepts only the bonds of love. None is too high or too low before Rāma. In this context it appears that there is a contradiction in the social outlook of Tulasîdāsa. His advocacy of the clearly-defined social distinctions is opposed to the principle of equality which he has propounded in several places. But, in fact, there is no inherent dichotomy, because he has demarcated the two areas to these two principles independently. The caste system is applicable to the day-to-day worldly relationships, wherein the various social distinctions and ranks cannot be ignored. On the other hand, the principle of equality holds good in the spiritual realm only. This is meant for those who have risen above mundane existence or have become saints or devotees. Such people, who look up to the Supreme Being and turn their back on the unreal world are free from the considerations of caste or class. Whatever their caste might be, if they have taken to godly life, then they should receive the same respect and honour as the Brāhmaṇa saints. Therefore, in the sphere of *Bhakti*, all the devotees are entitled to the same honour in society. But those, who have not attained a high spiritual level and are entangled in mundane life, are to be governed by the rules of society—by the rules of the caste system. This can be seen even today in the Hindû society. Worldly relations are determined on the basis of the caste system, but a saint or a sage receives universal veneration.

Tulasî's stand is very clear. He firmly supports the caste system in the Hindû society. He considers it an ideal organisation and does not therefore tolerate any laxity or infringement. In the ideal state of Rāma Rājya, people follow this system and are happy. "All go by their own ranks sanctioned by the scriptures." Similarly,

> "The scripture-based path of individual rank,
> Always gives happiness and eradicates fear, sorrow, and disease."

Whenever there is laxity in the operation of this system, he is unhappy about it and censures it. In his descriptions of *Kaliyuga*, he speaks of a widespread chaos rampant in society and tries to re-establish social order on the basis of the caste system. He does not want any change in the system and thus emerges as a staunch supporter of the structured hierarchy.

The extremist outlook of Tulasîdāsa can be seen in his anxiety to protect the rights of Brāhmaṇas as also in the low position given to Shûdras and women. Some scholars have supported these views on the ground of social discipline. Our aim, however, should not be to uphold or reject any views but to understand the contemporary social conditions and relationships along with their basic causes : because Tulasîdāsa does not require our support or opposition.

Tulasîdāsa believed, without doubt, in the superior status of the Brāhmaṇas, in the lower position of Shûdras and women in society, in the social order, in the duties of the leader and the king (and the mentor), the rights of the father and the husband, in the system of inheritance, and in social etiquette and dignity. But the views expressed by him were not just his own; they had come down to him as part of the tradition and therefore his social and moral ideals bear the stamp of the Middle Ages. It may be added here that most of them are still current in society.

For many centuries now, Hindû society has accorded a high status to the Brāhmaṇas and a low one to the Shûdras. During the Middle Ages this was done in a more rigorous manner. Just as in the Middle Ages a righteous king was looked

upon as a veritable part of God—a representative of God on earth, so also was the Brāhmaṇa considered to be a deity incarnate. He was called a 'god on earth'. Dasharatha thought it necessary to seek the permission of Vashiṣṭha before announcing the coronation of Rāma. Rāma does not like any disrespect to the Brāhmaṇas : "I do not like the opponents of the Brāhmaṇas," he says,

"He who serves the Brāhmaṇas—
free from deceit of mind, words and deeds,
Can command all the gods including myself,
Brahmā and Shiva."

Shûdras and women are given the lowest status. The statement about "the drum, the rustic, the shûdra, the beast, and the woman" makes this fact clear. Describing the story of his earlier birth, Kākabhushuṇḍi comments on low castes in the following words :

"Having acquired knowledge in spite of my low caste,
I behaved like a snake fed on milk."

The saying that 'a Shûdra will behave only after getting a kick' is still current. In the Middle Ages, the abhorrence for the low-bred was so strong that the Muslim rulers did not like to see their faces. Similarly, the low status of women is also a part of the ethos of that age. She had no rights of her own. Her position was determined by her husband's status. The accepted rule was that the woman is under the control of her father when she is a maiden, is guided by her husband after marriage, and is under charge of her son when she is a widow. She is thus never independent—because, when free, she is liable to become wayward. She is "naturally impure :" according to Shabarî "the meanest among the mean is the woman." All these ideas are the product of the Middle Ages.

Similarly, Tulasî's conception of the part-whole relationship in social structure is also of a fairly ancient origin. As the four organs are parts of the total personality, so also the various castes are parts of the body politic. The highest caste is like a mouth which is the leader, the servants are like hands, feet and eyes. The leader should receive the gifts and rationally

feed the other organs.

A reference to the conflict between the mouth and the other organs is also found in the struggle for rights between the Plebeians and the Patricians in the Roman history. As the story of the four castes can be traced back to the *Puruṣa-Sûkta* (in the *Rigvēda*) the episode of the mouth and the other organs is also of a very ancient origin. Tulasî stresses the need for harmony among the various sections of society in order to pave the way for a sound system based on reason and draws the attention of the elite to their responsibilities towards the rest of the society.

Like the leader, the king also has certain responsibilities. Though he is God's representative on earth, he is not above rules. He is like a father to his subjects. In fact, 'prajā' means offspring. The concept of the king as father is akin to the concept of the Patriarch, which has a long history. The king's first duty is to look after his subjects. In an era of political upheavals, Tulasî's statement viz. "A king whose subjects are unhappy must go to hell invariably !" becomes all the more significant. The following lines gave impetus to the people during their struggle for freedom :

> "Those who obey the dictates of their father
> Without questioning their propriety or otherwise,
> Are worthy of praise and happiness
> And of abode in Paradise."

Another pronouncement made by the poet in this context is equally important :

> "Deplorable is the king who is not acquainted with the rules of Polity,
> Who does not love his people like his own life."

The maximum rights in the family are bestowed on the father and the husband. For the child the father, and for the woman the husband are all in all. The father's word is not to be questioned : it is like 'law and duty'. For the woman, the ultimate duty is to obey her husband's orders. "For a woman husband is the only law, and she knows no other god." Reverence for father has very deep roots in Indian culture : "Look

upon your father as a god !" Respect for husband became more pronounced due to the religious, social and political conditions of the Middle Ages.

Inheritance also depends on the will of the father. Generally it is the eldest son who inherits the crown. King Dasharatha tells Kaikēyî that he had selected Rāma as his heir apparently on the basis of age, otherwise, so far as Rāma is concerned, he has no longing for the kingdom :

"Having no desire to rule, Rāma loves Bharata dearly.
I have observed the state policy on the basis of the age."

But this is only the state policy; if the father so desires, he can change the order and pass on the rights to the younger son, overlooking the claims of the elders. The father's consent alone makes this title valid. After the death of Dasharatha, Vashiṣṭha gives the ruling that Bharata should be the ruler, because the rights bestowed by the father are valid and sanctioned by the scriptures :

"Sanctioned by the scriptures, accepted by all
Whom father names on him the mantle falls."

Similarly, Sage Bharadwāja also assures Bharata that if he rules, he would not be blamed because the popular opinion and the authority of the scriptures provide that only he who is nominated by the father inherits the kingdom.

"The people and the scriptures all give nod,
Whom father names wields the rod."

Thus, the system of inheritance, as described by Tulasîdāsa was in conformity with the laws of contemporary society, and it is still current in almost the same form. Tulasî was really intolerant of any breach of social etiquette and social dignity.

The father's word must be obeyed without any consideration of propriety or otherwise. Defiance of the teacher is a punishable crime; 'otherwise the laws of the scriptures will be defined.' Disrespect to the husband is not acceptable under any circumstances :

"Aged, ailing, idiot, pauper,
Blind, deaf, wild, wretched ;

By insulting even such a husband,
the woman gets tortures of Hell."

The character of the *Mānasa*, like the personality of Man, is multi-dimensional and that is the reason of its popularity. Therefore, it is not possible to underline any particular reason. As all the threads woven together make up the total strength of a rope, so the integrated power of the various facets of the *Mānasa* accounts for its popularity. It cannot be said for certain whether the accepted religious beliefs, or the story of Rāma, the explication of high philosophical thoughts and morality or artistic excellence is responsible solely for the popularity of the poem, although each one of these factors is extremely significant in its own way. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider the cumulative effect of the *Mānasa* as the basis of its popularity. The moral dicta presented in an artistic form still reverberate in the voice of the semi-educated and illiterate masses of India. Simple exposition of serious moral issues supported by highly picturesque descriptions and emotional overtones is responsible for its wide appeal.

The happy combination of the poetic and moral qualities in the epic attracted vast numbers of admirers and the image of Tulasîdāsa was firmly engraven in the hearts of the people. It was indeed a rare coincidence. The poet and the devotee in Tulasîdāsa did not function in disjunction : they served as complements to each other. That's why the *Mānasa* uniformly serves a dual purpose : the ethical and the artistic. Moral values and the art of expression have received equal attention from its composer. For him the primary object of poetry is the welfare of the people.

"Fame, poetry and prosperity are effective indeed,
Only when, like the River of Heaven, they lead to the
welfare of all !"

But Tulasîdāsa is not satisfied with this. The capacity to do good will gratify the devotee but not the poet, because moral teaching is not his aim. Nobility of sentiment must be matched with artistic excellence. Therefore, apart from moral righteousness, poetry is measured on the touchstone of artistic

skill. Poetry is addressed to the enlightened reader who is its real judge. If the sensible readers do not appreciate a work of art, it is a sheer waste of the poet's labour. Therefore, Tulasîdāsa prays before starting the composition of the *Mānasa* that his work may be respected in the proper circles.

"Be pleased and give me a blessing,
My work should win the esteem of the noble;
A work not admired by the wise,
Is a waste of time on the part of the poet."

Thus, the poet presents the two-fold standard of morality and art for poetry, and this was really a unique event in the literary world of that age. By setting such a sound standard for poetry, the poet expresses his opinion (in conformity with the tenets of poetics) that poetic talent cannot be acquired : it is God-given. Like devotion, it also depends on God's grace. If God is pleased, the Muse dances to the tune of the heart-beats of the poet like puppets dancing to the tune of the Master :

"The Muse is like a puppet,
Rāma is like the Master;
In the heart of the poet favoured
She dances in her full charms."

Poetic talent, therefore, is a gift of God. While expanding the metaphor of the Mānasa, the pool, the poet hints at the creative process also. Poetry is the result of the combination of sentiments, intellect, and divine inspiration. When the feelings or emotions in the heart, coupled with the intellect, are infused with noble thoughts, by the grace of Shāradā, then the pearl of poetry comes into being.

"The heart is like an ocean,
And the intellect like the mother-pearl;
Shāradā is like Swāti, so say the wise;
When it pours the rain of beautiful thoughts,
Poetry springs beautiful like a pearl."

The poet describes through a metaphor the mental process involved in poetic creation. It cannot be conceived through

sensory organs ; it requires a vision, an insight. When the poet dives deep, his mind becomes clear, his heart is filled with emotions, and the overflow from the creative mind assumes the form of poetry.

The source of this poetic flow is the reservoir full of the glorious deeds of Rāma. Passing through the intellect, this water settles down in deep recesses of the mind whence the poetic stream gushes out.

The probing intellect and the depth of heart receive equal importance. The poet believes that emotive and cognitive elements are both responsible for poetic creation. Sensitivity and sensibility combine to give poetry its prestigious place. Noble thoughts and the intellect are the bases and their significant role is acknowledged without doubt, though the poet makes it clear that the mind is not opposed to the heart. The intellect is like a mother-pearl in the ocean of heart. The 'ocean of heart', with its depth and expanse, denotes the profundity and expansiveness of emotions.

This is how the poet's creative mind brought forth the *Mānasa.*

If the gift of poetry which comes from the grace of God is used for base purposes, it would be misusing the attainment. It should be directed towards higher goals, and the highest goal for Tulasî is devotion to Rāma. Rāma is a symbol of nobility, purity and piety, and even his name is enough to awaken sublime feelings in our hearts. Inspired by such ethical considerations, and conscious of the potentiality of the name of Rāma to stir up aesthetic emotions, Tulasî goes on to claim that if poetic wit is devoid of the name of Rāma then it would lack brilliance, and even mediocre poetry adorned by his name is commendable.

"Excellent work written by a great poet,
Does not appeal without Rāma's name;
Devoid of all good qualities, penned by indifferent poets,
To a poem adorned by Rāma's name
The sages listen and recite with veneration;
Like honeybees, they garner only the essential quality."

In addition to the moral tone, Tulasî also emphasises the sublimity of the poetic theme. According to him, the motive of the poet and the content of poetry should both be lofty. The highest goal of human life is devotion. When the aim of the poet is high, i.e. when it is directed towards devotion, the Muse rushes to his help from her heavenly abode. On the contrary, when the poet loses sight of his noble mission and employs his poetic talent in the service of the men of the world, he causes grievous offence to the Muse.

These are revolutionary ideas, indeed. They stress noble intent, without doubt, but they also proclaim the freedom of the poet. They censure the poets who sell away their gift for a few pieces of silver. Tulasîdāsa has very boldly condemned the poets who engaged themselves in singing the glory of the men of the world. That was an era of court poets, of poets dependent on royal patronage, and at such a point of time these comments assume special significance. By denouncing contemporary literary practices, Tulasîdāsa has left behind for the ages to come a legacy of free expression (of keeping away from flattery).

The freedom of the poet is also evident from the concept of self-gratification on which Tulasîdāsa insisted. It involves the principle of the sincerity of feeling and expression. Self-gratification means that the poet sings, or ought to sing, for the gratification of his heart or his inner consciousness, the theme of his poetry being such as appeals to his heart. If the theme or the subject-matter does not absorb the poet's mind, or if it does not give him satisfaction, it cannot generate good poetry. Therefore, the principle of self-gratification is the very warp and woof of good poetry. It is essential that the poet must be free to choose his own theme, according to his own will, to create a work of quality. In other words, poetry and poetic creation is part of the inner self ; it cannot be made an object of fashion or commission.

This principle of self-gratification should not, however, be labelled as individualistic and therefore isolated from the good of the society in general. In fact, Tulasî's self is not narrow or hidebound. Its gratification encompasses general happiness. In several places the poet has expressed a longing

for a way of life in which he can share the sorrows and the joys of others, i.e. his heart is in communion with the hearts of the people around him. In spite of the limits imposed by the poet on himself he is fully conscious of the communicative process and the purpose of poetry in general. He talks of self-gratification but he is not self-centred, because poetry justifies its existence only when the poet's feelings become the feelings of others. The poet is, therefore, fully aware of the social role of poetry or of the sociology of poetry. Poetry is an individual work of a poet but it is not self-sufficient ; it requires a reader, a listener or a spectator to whom it must be communicated, and to whom it must appeal. Only then can the significance of poetry (and the poet) be realised. During the process of its creation, poetry is a part of the poet, but after it is created it becomes a part of society. Sometimes in spite of the poet, society has a greater control over his creation and makes certain demands on poetry. The foremost demand is that the feelings and ideas of the poet must be communicated to the people through the primary social medium—namely, the language. In this way the principle of communication becomes as significant tenet of poetry which is, indeed, the social aspect of poetry.

The poet has only one power, the power of words. This is his forte, his medium-material. He cannot go beyond words —in the sense that he cannot use any other medium. The ideas of the poet can be expressed only through word and meaning, and he must conform to these, like a dancer dancing to the beat or rhythm of the dance. Tulasîdāsa asserts in unequivocal terms that the real power of the poet lies in the word and its meaning : "the ultimate power lies in the word and in the meaning."

Tulasî illustrates the significance of communication through the analogy of the jewel, the ruby and the pearl. They spring from the snake's head, the mine and the forehead of an elephant, but their worth is not appreciated at the place of their origin : when, however, they adorn the crown of a king or the body of a beautiful woman, their lustre is enhanced. Similarly poetry is born in the heart of the poet (and this in itself is very important), but it justifies its existence only when it finds a proper recipient. On the above analogy poesy is born at one

place, i.e., in the mind of the poet, and it acquires its proper significance and charm elsewhere, i.e., in the mind of the reader.

> "The jewel, the ruby and the pearl do not adorn
> The snake, the mountain, and the elephant ;
> The crown of a king or the body of a beauty
> Enhances their lustre manifold ;
> So poesy, the wise say, out of poet's soul
> Is born but gains lustre elsewhere."

Thus, in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, Tulasîdāsa has discussed all the important aspects of poetry and their theoretical implications. In the Bālakāṇḍa he uses the metaphor of a mānasa or a reservoir to bring out the different elements of poetry. So when he talks of his lack of competence in the sphere of poetic art, it can be interpreted only as a sign of modesty. He was fully acquainted with all the aspects of poetry.

In short, Tulasîdāsa has treated of the intrinsic and the extrinsic aspects, the soul and the body, the individual and the social aspects of poetry, and has also tried to effect a fusion of the two. As a two-fold test of poetry, he has underlined (a) its capacity to promote general welfare, and (b) its "recognition by the wise and the good." This reveals the intellectual profundity of his genius and is the secret of his success.

Another element which has contributed to his success and popularity is, what can be termed as the poet's catholic vision or his sympathetic outlook or his humanitarian views. Though his portrayals are not realistic, he definitely had an eye for realism. His penetrating insight lays bare the deep, complex and dark recesses of human heart, yet he does not mock at the human nature but elevates it with a touch of compassion. In spite of a positive recognition of the illusory nature of the world, he gives a faithful representation of this so-called illusion and only then offers an advice to liberate oneself from it. Similarly, the poet has given a realistic picture of the misery and the miserable creatures of this world. They are also illusions, but he does not take them lightly or ignore them. The anomalies of real life, its misery, pain and torture are presented in a matter-of-fact way. The poet has also described vividly

his own sufferings. These descriptions, with a stress on the factual experience, have the force of realism and a natural hue. An example of this can be found in the poet's statement about the curses of poverty. "There is no misery greater than poverty." According to him, there are fourteen types of creatures who live like the dead and a poor man is one of them :

> "Reactionary, lustful, impetuous and dull,
> Pauper, notorious, extremely old,
> Sensual, cynic, and sinful,
> These fourteen exist like corpses."

and

> "The fire of the stomach is
> wilder than the fire in a wood."

These powerful descriptions of poverty are based on his own experience. He had cried for a morsel of food, had grinned before all in utter helplessness, without shame he had exposed his famished stomach before people, and yet there was none to give him even a handful of dust—nobody had even a kind word for him. That is why he considers poverty to be the worst misery. This is all the more significant in view of the fact that even after he had become a saint and could see through the deceptive appearance of the world, he did not try to hide these bitter experiences. He knew full well that whereas he had become enlightened, the vast majority of human beings was still smarting under the nightmare. Till these people are redeemed, the miseries, though they are false, cannot be ignored. This is like the pain felt on seeing one's head cut off in a dream, which can vanish only after the dream is over and the dreamer is awake. The poet portrays these sleeping multitudes from their own point of view. The ethical code and the social ideals are meant only for those who are enlightened : for them there are no codes of conduct and no bondage. Perhaps, the poet thought, a detailed description of the miseries and the sufferings of humanity in trance of illusion will cajole it towards the path of virtue. Thus the vivid portrayals of the hard realities, anomalies and miseries of life supported indirectly the poet's ethical ideals and spiritual aims. The touch of realism helped

to make his ideal all the more commendable, because in spite of his idealism, the poet has not ignored reality.

Besides his bias for realism, another feature of Tulasî's poetry is its pervasive character. The poet had an extensive as well as intensive experience of the complexities of life. He had passed through sorrows and joys. His circle of friends included beggars as well as kings and emperors; he had dealt with illiterate fools and scholars both. During his sojourns he had been to many places and had become familiar with different types of people. The essence of all this experience is reflected in his poetry. In his pictures of society people find glimpses of their own lives. He showed them the way to escape from miseries; his words brought forth a spring of hope in the hearts of the people and his preachings assured them a noble life. As a result of all this they all became his followers and looked up to him for guidance in every sphere of life. Thus realism, idealism, humanism and catholicity of vision (coupled with aesthetic merits, of course) established his image for all times to come in the hearts of the rich and the poor, the scholar and the illiterate, the high and the low. His place is permanent and his popularity everlasting.[1]

1. Rendered by Shrî Ashōk Kālrā from the Hindi version of Prof. Bārānnikōv's Introduction to the Russian Translation of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*.

3

The Age of Tulasîdāsa

PROF. BANĀRSÎ PRASĀD SAKSĒNĀ

Rāma is generally deemed to be the product of his environment, but a greater man is he who imprints on his environment the stamp of his own personality : he thus becomes eternal, posterity remembers him and honours him with love and intimate regard. Tulasîdāsa was a man who belonged to this category. He not only outshone his contemporaries, but excelled his predecessors and successors alike. For centuries past his name has been a byword both among the elite and the non-elite, the intellectual and the non-intellectual, the literate and the non-literate. Though he died about four hundred years ago, he is very much alive even in this age of cold rationalism and scientific materialism. He may be described as the ever-fruitful gift of the age in which he lived.

Indeed, it was a remarkable age in the history of our country. It was an age characterised by the quest for the higher values of life. It was an age of splendour and struggle, of conquest and consolidation, of idealism and realism, of imagination and action. Excluding, perhaps, the age of the Imperial Guptas, our country had never before witnessed the assemblage of such a galaxy of poets and philosophers, of saints and politicians, of craftsmen and artists, and of scholars and thinkers. Each was preoccupied with the creative process,

using and exploiting his genius to accomplish something original. It appeared that art and literature, architecture and painting, politics and statesmanship were all converging on a single focal point with the supreme object of imparting to every phase of life dazzling glory and serene equanimity of life. This was in striking contrast to the tendencies and happenings in the preceding century.

The course of the history of our country may be delineated by an undulating curve inclining up and down alternately. And, curiously enough, whereas in other countries of the world the Reformation and the Renaissance occurred only once, our country witnessed them more than once. Another special feature is that, whereas in other countries the Renaissance is followed by Reformation, in India the process was just in reverse of it. The Upaniṣads occasioned intense intellectual awakening, but the period covered by them did not witness any Renaissance. Buddhism and Jainism were merely offshoots of the Upaniṣadic thought; they only laid more stress on the day-to-day problems of life and their solution, eschewing metaphysical aspects. A full-fledged renaissance, however, occurred during the Gupta age, but it had been preceded by a number of reformist movements, though not of a comprehensive type. Again, there was a plethora of reformers from Shankarāchārya to Nimbārka and from Kabîra and Nānaka to Dhana, Ravidāsa, and others. This reformist movement of the 15th century was followed by the Renaissance of the 16th century.

It cannot be denied that the 15th century scenes provided the background and base for the glory of the 16th century. From the time of the invasion of Timûr to Bābur's phenomenal triumph at Pānîpat, the entire period of more than one hundred years was marked by the operation of centrifugal tendencies when the country passed through the sad and miserable plight of political and cultural disintegration. In fact, it was an era of petty and sordid conflicts almost in every walk of life. The only saving grace was the presence of a number of Sûfî saints, but none of them of the calibre of a Shēikh Muînuddîn Chishtî or Nizāmuddîn Auliyā. In a way the unrestrained dissemination of sûfî ideologies gave a strong blow to its basic unity. The larger the number of *pîrs* and *murshids*, the greater the

conflict of ideals and practices. So although sûfism was taking long strides over the sub-continent, its universal aspect was gradually receding and each *dāra*, each *Khānqah* was becoming a separate entity. In other words, like contemporary politics, religious ideology was also tending to become parochial and circumscribed. Add to this the rise of the Mahdawî sect under the leadership of Sayyid Muhammad Abdullā of Jaunpur. Thus even among the Muslims, Sûfism, orthodoxy and neophytes were rendering confusion worse confounded. Muslim religious thought, like the Turkish politics, was in doldrums. Clarity of objective had almost ceased to exist.

The same holds true of the Hindû fold. Much credit is given to Shankarāchārya for having destroyed the surviving traces of Buddhism. There is no doubt that his was a dynamic personality, hardly ever at rest with itself or with the rest of the world. But, closely examined, his theory of *Advaitawāda* reflects a pessimistic sense of reality. When the flight of his rationalistic imagination could not go beyond a certain height, it stopped short at the void, or negativity comparable to the Buddhist *shûnya.* He propounded the negative aspect of the Supreme Reality. To explain the cause underlying it, a guess may be hazarded. Shankara's ideology was conditioned by the chaotic contemporary political conditions. The fact of the matter is that existing political confusion always synchronised with stress on the vacuumistic tendencies. It had occurred in the past in the case of Jainism and Buddhism and was the same in the case of Shankara. The theoretical aspect of his philosophy cannot be separated from the current social and political trends. In the Ancient and Medieval periods of our history religious and social currents were interlinked, and both in their turn were conditioned by politics. When after the death of Harṣa, centralised power ceased to exist, a vacuum was created in the political atmosphere which was bound to react on the forthcoming religious philosophy. Shankara was the child as well as father of his age. As a child he could not shake off the living environment around him, as a father he philosophised that environment and reduced it to the first principle of metaphysics. Māyā and *Advaitawāda* were the two devices which could overhaul the existing religious chaos, the legacy of the renaissance which

had occurred under the Guptas. When a ruler like Harṣa could not make up his mind with regard to a single religious or spiritual belief, the condition of the masses may better be imagined than described. It was to remove this state of wavering that Shankara propounded his ideas and made a whirlwind tour of the sub-continent to propagate them.

But unfortunately instead of salvaging the situation, he added to the prevailing confusion. He sadly ignored the importance of emotion in human life. Religion is more a matter of faith than of reason. Pure rationalism is destructive of theism. So, when Shankara attempted to combine rationalism and theism, he failed miserably. His metaphysics could convince only the philosophers, but not the man on the street whose spiritual yearning could obtain satisfaction only if the concept of a personal deity could be visualised, and not merely imagined or argued. No wonder, therefore, that Shankara's theory was assailed from more than one quarter. But the common ground of these assailants or critics was their emphasis on emotion and their effort to visualise a personal god who could be approached with loving or respectful devotion. Rāmānuja, Mādhawa, Nimbārka all adopted the same attitude though they differed in their approach to the basic problem. As all of these spiritual reformers were born and brought up in the South, it may be justly presumed that they were familiar with or even influenced by the ideas of Ālvārs. Shāstric Bhakti was in this way the joint handiwork of the Āchāryas and Ālvārs. It is called Shāstric because it was based upon the interpretation of the Shāstras. Unlike Shankara, the Āchāryas did not relegate emotion to the background, they gave it its due importance. It may be added that the political atmosphere in the Deccan was comparatively more stable.

Curiously enough, every Āchārya, in order to propagate his faith or his point of view, made travelling widely over Northern India the sacred mission of his life. And it may be presumed that he must have disseminated his ideas without any hitch or hindrance, because there is no record of any Turkish ruler having interfered with his missionary activity. Thus between the 11th and 14th centuries a tremendous amount of conflicting propaganda must have saturated the

minds of the Hindûs of Northern India. And although their temples were being demolished and they were being subjected to payment of *jaziā*, the peace ensured to them by the centralised despotism enabled them to carry on their religious and spiritual pursuits almost smoothly. The 13th and 14th centuries witnessed the rise and fall of a number of dynasties, but each of them according to its own measure and capacity attempted to build up an empire.

While conceding that political integration did not lead to social or religious integration, it did tone down to a large extent petty rivalries and conflicts, thus indirectly paving the way for bringing the two communities closer to each other. Another indirect consequence was that, just as in the person of the sultān the masses could see a living ruler who could be approached, or was approachable, in the religious sphere also they were enabled to visualise and worship a personal god who was both loving and merciful. This also holds true of the Muslim masses. But the weak link in this form of faith was the multiplicity of views sought to be inculcated. Among the Hindûs included *Vishiṣṭādwaita*, *Dwaita*, *Dwaitādwaita* etc. As to the Muslims, besides the conflict between the orthodox *ulēmā* and the liberal sûfîs, there were polemical disputes between the doctrines of Wahdatul Wajûd and Wahdatul Shuhûd. This was the atmosphere in the fifteenth century, when both political and spiritual horizons were clouded with sharp tendencies of disruption and disintegration. A sense of disappointment and frustration was eating into the vitals of society and religion and the situation called for urgent remedial measures, both immediate and long-term.

This gloomy outlook, however, had a faint silver lining. Nearly two centuries of political domination of the Turco-Afghāns had led to consequences of a far-reaching character. During this period, the first phase of religious intolerance had almost come to a close. A Fîrōz Tughlaq or a Sikandar Lōdî were exceptions rather than a rule. And whatever of religious intolerance still lingered on was confined to those who had vested interests in administration. It was economic rather than ethical or spiritual. The masses, both Hindû and Muslim, were sick of it, and there is little evidence of communal riots

during this period. On the other hand, the two major communities had come closer to each other under the pressure of socio-economic forces. Indeed, even during the heyday of Turkish imperialism the economic resources of the country were almost the absolute monopoly of Hindû businessmen who scrupulously refrained from involving themselves in politics. It is on record that when Fîrōz Tughlaq was on his triumphal march from Thattāh to Delhi, at numerous places he was welcomed by *Sāhûkārs* and *Sēṭhs*. Earlier even Alāuddîn Khiljî had of necessity to depend on Hindûs for collection of revenue and for making his experiment of market control a success. Moreover, the large influx of Hindû converts into the Muslim fold had destroyed the exclusiveness of the ruling community. Add to this the urge for spiritual equality engendered in the lower strata of Hindû society by the impact of sûfî teachings and by their daily association with their brethren of the similar category among the Muslims. Nor can we lose sight of the fact that the principle of equality ordained by Islām was a matter more of theory than of practice. And very like their Hindû brethren, Muslim masses were also groaning under the dead weight of ceremonialism, ritualism and superstition. Thus the ground was ready for a socio-religious upheaval. And in the circumstances the initiative was to come, as it did come, from the lower strata of society.

It is worth noting that among the motley crowd of disciples traditionally associated with Rāmānanda, men hailing from the lower classes dominated. They were fed up with political exploitation and spiritual charlatanism. They were moving almost in a void. And history repeated itself. In the Ancient age Buddha and Mahāvîra had denounced the supremacy of Brāhmaṇas, the infallibility of the Vedas, the hollowness of ritualistic ceremonialism and the cruelty of animal sacrifices ; similarly the saints of the lower castes rose almost in a body against the social and religious evils rampant in the society at large. They enunciated their basic maxims, *viz.*, cultivation of faith or *bhakti*, renunciation of the laws laid down by the priestly class or classes, and a firm adherence to ethical and moral values. And Kabîra proved to be the best exponent of this religio-social philosophy, if it was a philosophy

at all. As the *Shûnyawāda* of Buddha was the consequence of political vacuum or political chaos, similarly the *Nirguṇawāda* of Kabîra and others of his ilk was conditioned by the gloomy political atmosphere which was surcharged with the tendency of disintegration rendering the pursuit of healthy spiritual and secular life difficult, if not impossible.

Indian social tradition had deified the ruler and the Muslim medieval political ideology placed him next in rank to the prophets. Both Hindûs and Muslims expected their rulers to protect and promote their religious interests and their spiritual life. But in the fifteenth century, this function had almost ceased to be performed by them in actual practice, if not in theory. Thus there arose the need of discovering a supernatural element which might satisfy the demands of the situation. The *Sākāra* Brahma of the Hindûs and the God of Muslims with symbolic attributes did not come up to the mark; for in the ultimate analysis both had led to superstition and ritualism. This was the real genesis of Kabîra's *Nirguṇa Brahma.* It was neither the offspring of his intention, nor a figment of his imagination. It had an environmental genesis behind it. The statement may appear to be a little surprising, but historical logic warrants it.

Like Shankarāchārya, Kabîra expounded an ideology which proved to be extremely catching and it dominated the spiritual life of the 15th century and even after it. Its simplicity and effectiveness were undoubted. Its contents were both constructive and destructive, in the sense that they pointed to a way of life and cut at the roots of the prevailing evils. Kabîra's ideology was neither predominantly Hindû nor absolutely Muslim. It transcended both. It was as plain as complicated because it had assimilated ideas from various sources. Nānaka in his turn almost repeated his senior contemporary. He vehemently asserted that he was neither a Hindû nor a Musalamān. Unlike Kabîra, however, he travelled extensively, preaching and propagating his beliefs. In short, the fifteenth century was a period of reformation or, to be more precise, of experiments in reformation. It heralded the Renaissance of the age of Tulasîdāsa.

Never before did in the history of our country occur

such a conflict of ideas and their integration in the various fields of life. The new age was dominated by a quest for an ideal god and an ideal man. It was conditioned as much by the fast developing religious thought as by the changes in the socio-economic system. Thus India presented the picture of a thousand flowers blooming together. To delineate this multicoloured and multiphased picture is not an easy task because of the complications of the action, reaction and interaction of various forces. Their analysis is possible, but it would affect the totality of their beauty and charm. Nevertheless, to appreciate the whole, a survey of the parts becomes a historical necessity.

For the last three hundred years, the Turco-Afghāns had been dominating the political scene; but it would be remembered that politics in the medieval period was the concern of the select few. Dynastic changes—and these were many—did not materially unruffle the normal socio-religious trends, although it cannot be denied that the arrival of the Muslims did add a new dimension to the life of the people in this land. But by the beginning of the 16th century they had been completely absorbed into the general stream; though the practice of dual citizenship still persisted. It may, however, be observed that the stories of Turkish tyranny and exploitation contain more of exaggeration than actual fact.

In the religious sphere, broadly speaking, the spirit of the age expressed itself in two aspects, the Muslim and non-Muslim. In the latter may be included Hindûs of various denominations and Pārsîs and Christians. But neither the Muslims nor the non-Muslims could be classed as undivided units, affiliated to any single ideology or practice. There existed sharp, and sometimes irreconcilable, divisions among them. The Shiāhs and Sunnîs, for example, were exclusive communities imbued with feelings of hostility towards each other. But this hostility in this age came to be contained within certain limits, mainly because of political impact. Having been expelled, the second Moghul emperor, Humāyûṅ, sought refuge in Persia and when he returned from that country he had among his prominent advisers and followers a large number of Shiāhs who helped him and his immediate successor to recover their lost prestige and

possessions. Henceforward the Persians began to hold key positions in the Moghul administration, although the rulers were Sunnîs. Thus the Shiāh-Sunnî conflict was toned down.

Nor did the disintegration of the Sultānate bring to an end the Ulēmā class which was the source and mainstay of orthodoxy. From time to time it asserted and re-asserted itself in the fields of both politics and religion. Though it commanded the respect and esteem of the followers of the Sunnî faith, it could make hardly any contribution to the Muslim thought which had become static and stereotyped. The Ulēmā only acted as the watch-dogs of traditions of Islāmic piety. They were ever afraid of even an iota of innovation; they deemed themselves hide-bound to the four schools of Muslim Jurisprudence, most of them following the Hanafî School. Nor could their private and personal lives be held up as examples of righteousness. They were vociferous in proclaiming the laws of Islām, no matter whether they themselves observed them or not.

There were, however, certain exceptions also. For instance, Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpurî was a bitter opponent of the worldly and official Ulēmā whom he denounced with much vehemence. In fact, criticism of the greedy and worldly-minded Ulēmā had been going on ever since the establishment of the Turkish rule in India. Baranî condemned them as Ulmaisûsm and subsequent historians did the same. But there were some Sûfî-minded Ulēmās who, though well-versed in the Qorān and *Hadîth*, lived abstemious lives, disdaining the exhibition of their literary merits and their spiritual attainments. Of these, the first to be mentioned is Sheikh Alî, a widely travelled scholar, who was reluctant to see Sultān Bahādur Shāh of Gujarāt because he would be dressed in clothes not permitted by Shāra. His mantle fell on Sheikh Abdul Wahāb Muttaqî who cultivated a liberal attitude towards the Mehdawîs whom he did not consider to be atheists and unbelievers because they recited the *kalîmah*, offered prayers and preoccupied themselves with *dhikr* which they held as an important part of their religious life. Another was Sheikh Safîuddîn who emphasised the virtue of tolerance in religious discussions. Finally, reference should be made to Sheikh Abdul Haq

Muhaddith who, it is said, migrated to Gujarāt in order to avoid signing Akbar's Mahzar. Subsequently he returned and settled down at Delhi where he was left undisturbed.

Of the Sûfî *silsilahas* the most popular was that of the Chishtîs. It has been aptly remarked that the 'outlook of the Chishtî sûfîs was broad enough to recognise without inhibitions and reservations the possibility of there being many paths to God'. They freely studied Hindû books on Yōga. Sheikh Nizāmuddîn was familiar with the system. Sheikh Nasîruddîn refers to the Siddhas, and Sheikh Gēsû Darāz claimed to have studied Sanskrit books and Hindû mythology. It may be presumed that the practice continued subsequently. In this context mention should be made of Sheikh Piyārāh, a disciple of Gēsû Darāz. Prof. Mujeeb has recounted an interesting anecdote which is illustrative of the Sûfî trends. When Sheikh Piyārāh went to the hospice of Gēsû Darāz, the first question which the latter put to him was "Darvēsh, have you ever been in love?" To this Piyārāh replied, "Sire, I have come to you to learn about love, what can I know about it?" Upon this the Sheikh said, "My object is to examine your condition and understand your temperament and aptitude. If any incident has occurred, speak out and do not conceal it." Now Piyārāh replied, "Once I saw a Hindû woman. I could think of no means of (satisfying myself with) looking at her, so I put on the sacred thread and wearing a *dhōtî* went to the temple where she used to go for worship." The Sheikh embraced him and said, "You are a man of great courage; where could I find a man like you to guide on the path of God? What you have done is an act of lofty courage. People love their religion more than anything else, but you have sacrificed it for the sake of love."

Whatever the authenticity of the anecdote, it represents a very important tendency in the realm of religious thought. It unfolds the process of progress from physical love to spiritual love, from the finite to the infinite, from earth to heaven. And Piyārāh's was not a singular case. Many others are on record. Love was the very breath of the nostrils of the Sûfî. He lived for it and died for it. It transcended all restraints of rituals and orthodoxy. It defied custom and convention. Did not Mîrā Bāî, who lived in the same period, do it?

According to Professor Mujeeb, Sheikh Muhammad Malādeh and Sheikh Rizqullāh Mushtāqî represented a type of sûfism in which there was harmonious blend of poetry and spiritual love. Sheikh Malādeh is reported to have been brought to the verge of death when he heard a song, the theme of which was separation from the beloved, and he recovered when the theme was changed into union with the beloved. This reminds one of a similar episode related in the *Bhāgawata*. Once in a bright moonlit night Lord Krishṇa began to play on his flute. Its melodious notes proved so irresistible to the *gōpîs* that they fled from their hearth and homes, abandoning their children and their husbands, to meet their beloved. For a while Lord Krishṇa remained amongst them, but all of a sudden he became invisible. The pangs of separation became unbearable and the *gōpîs* began to pine with love, wandering in the jungle in search of their beloved. They forgot everything except the object of their love. Ultimately they fell down weeping. Then Krishṇa reappeared and explained to them the virtue of separation in the realm of love. Union is liable to cause forgetfulness of the beloved, but separation keeps her memory ever green.

Sheikh Rizqullāh Mushtāqî expressed his sentiments of love through the medium of verse which he composed both in Hindi and Persian. Sheikh Abdul Quddûs, Sheikh Yûnus, the Mad, Miyāṅ Tejan, the Mad are other examples of love-lorn saints. Sheikh Abdul Quddûs wrote in one of his letters that the destruction of the external aspects of religion sometimes becomes essential, and it was for this reason that some men of God had shaved their beards, put on the sacred thread and gone into temples. He rejected the distinction between a Muslim and a Kāfir, because all existence is one and all existence is in God. Such was his interpretation of the doctrine of Wandat-al-Wajûd or Unity of Existence.

In course of time the Qādirî and Suhrāwardî orders got merged into each other. Both these orders were opposed to *Sama* or spiritual music which resembles the Hindû *Kîrtana*. The centre of the Qādirî order was at Uch near Multān. It was very affluent. Its sources of attraction lay in the myths and legends which had gathered round the person of Sheikh Muhammad-al-Husainî who had established it in India. Its representative

in the early 16th century was Makhdûm Sheikh Abdul Qādir (1459-1533). He claimed to have seen the Prophet face to face and had the power to heal all diseases. Sheikh Dāûd of Jhaniwal and Sheikh Muhammad Hasan were his junior contemporaries.

Sheikh Dāûd owed allegiance both to the Suhrāwardî and Chishtî orders. He spent 20 years in austerities wandering in deserts and continents. Ultimately he settled down at Shēr-gaṛh. His liberality and sermons earned for him wide fame. Even the historian Badāûnî paid him a visit and was surprised to find hundreds of Hindû families coming to him daily to be converted. He declined to meet emperor Akbar. This is reminiscent of the attitude of the poet saint Kumbhanadāsa who flatly rejected the alluring offer of Rājā Mān Singh, saying : "What business have saints to visit Sîkrî? During the onward and homeward journey the shoes get tattered, and the name of Hari is forgotten."

Of the Shattārîs who had established their centres at Jaunpur, Sambhal, Kālpî, Āgrā, Burhānpur, Baṛōdā, Ahmedā-bād, Ajmēr, Sarhind, Ujjain, Sārangpur, Maidû and Gwālior, the name of Sheikh Muhammad Ghaus is very important. He combined in himself the austerities of Hindû Yōgîs and Muslim saints. He spent 12 years on the slopes of the hills of Chunār subsisting only on tree leaves. He studied Sanskrit and wrote Kalîd Makhzan, combining Sûfî doctrines with the Hindû astrological theories, and Bahrul Hayāt, on the methods of self-discipline and breath-control. To them may be added Kanzul Tauhîd, Jawāhir Khamsa, Nasāir and Zamāir. He respected cows and maintained a herd of them in his hospice at Gwā-lior. According to Badāûnî, he was noted for his courtesy and humility, so much so that even when a kāfir came to visit him he stood up respectfully. In the garb of poverty, he was the possessor of worldly dignity and splendour.

There were, however, a number of saints who owned allegiance to no particular order and yet had captured popu-lar imagination. They fearlessly abandoned what was positively enjoined. Some of them did not even offer prayers. They are styled as 'majûbs' or the absorbed. They were subject to changing moods and capable of working miracles. Sheikh

Kapûr of Gwālior gave up the profession of a soldier and spent his time in supplying water to widows. He would sit in contemplation in his house and reply to questions as if in a delirium. He stood praying throughout the whole night. Sometimes he laughed or wept continuously. He died in 1571. Sheikh Ārif Husain turned round pieces of paper into gold coins and procured fruits out of season. He prayed and fasted but he kept his face covered. Sheikh Pîrak lived in a cave infested with snakes. He subsisted on dry bread and on the fruits of a tree which he had himself planted. Sheikh Burhān Ansārî of Kālpî, according to Badāûnî, who visited him in 1559, did not eat meat for 50 years and subsisted on milk and rice. Though he did not know Arabic, he discussed the Qurān eloquently.

The contribution of the Sûfîs and saints to popular life, both Hindû and Muslim, was remarkable, though it has not been adequately assessed so far. They were the first to adopt the local or regional language as the medium for the propagation of their ideas, which were versified by poets. In their realm, Islām ceases to be a dividing or discriminating force. They adopt Hindi mythology and Hindû deities and write about them with as much enthusiasm as a Hindû. Malik Muhammad Jāisî (1493-1542) selected the romantic figure of Padminî and wove round it a didactic allegory. He did not hestitate to paint in dark colours the character of Alāuddîn Khiljî. Writing in Masanawî style, he in the first instance praises God, then the Prophet, and finally the ruling sovereign, Shēr Shāh. But in the expounding of *Vēdānta* and *Haṭha Yōga* he provides ample evidence of his deep acquaintance with them. Nor does he fail in his characterisation of Hindû figures to ignore Hindû moral and ethical standards. He deftly delineates the pangs of separation after the traditional Bhāgawata style. His main theme is the triumph of sacred and true love.

Thus the Sûfîs practised love as an article of faith and the poets described it in terms of grace and beauty. Their combined efforts produced an atmosphere in which human values attained transcendental heights. Both of them gave a new message to society. It was characterised by a passionate desire for integrating conflicting ideals and principles and for so moulding

them that they could flow in the current of harmony. And this was the meaning of the renaissance which was taking long strides. The forces and tendencies behind it were different from and in some respects a continuation of the spiritual upsurge of the preceding century.

What the poets and the Sûfîs propagated in realms of thought and imagination was transformed into reality by the rulers. With the fall of the Lōdî empire, the period of centrifugal tendencies was over. The pendulum had swung in the opposite direction. Bābur established a new empire, and although his son and successor Humāyûṅ lost it, the tendency for political integration did not disappear. The Sûrs carried it further and finally Akbar forged it forward to its logical conclusion. Like the emperor Ashōka he aimed at cultural as well as political fusion. The two supplemented and complemented each other. He may be described as the harbinger of a new era of peace and prosperity. He ruthlessly suppressed and destroyed all impediments which obstructed the unification of Northern India and built up an empire on very broad-based foundations. His achievements were a source of honour as much to him as to the country in which he was born and bred. He was far superior to his contemporary Queen Elizabeth.

Akbar's court radiated a theosophic culture. His nine gems are famous in history. Abul Fazl was a literary giant. He wrote *Akbarnāmā* and *Ain-i-Akbarî* which, besides being a mine of information, are masterpieces of literary style. Indeed, to him must be given the credit of having perfected the classical Indo-Persian language. Never before had any writer expressed himself in such a ponderous and eloquent form and never afterwards could anyone imitate it. He blended the complexity of Sanskrit prose with the sweetness of Persian vocabulary, thus creating a marvellous effect. His expression is as grand and glorious as was his emperor. In Akbar he found an ideal monarch gifted with unique qualities and virtues. No wonder that he showered unstinted praises on him.

His elder brother Faizî was undoubtedly one of the greatest Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit scholars of his age. Badāûnî pays a rich tribute to his literary and poetic attainments. He remarks, "In many separate branches of knowledge such as

poetry, the composition of enigmas, prosody, rhyme, history, philosophy, medicine, prose composition Sheikh Faizî had no equal in his time. In his poetic compositions there is both beauty of form and maturity of thought." He belonged to the anti-orthodox group. He translated the *Bhagawad-Gîtā* and *Nala Damayantî* from Sanskrit into Persian. His Persian version of the *Gîtā* became popular among Hindûs, particularly among the Kāyasthas. A few illustrative lines from one of his odes may here be quoted :

> Destroy not the Kābāh, O Love, for now and then
> The travellers lagging behind
> Find there a moment's refuge.

Only Faizî could dare write in this strain, and this was possible because of the liberal atmosphere of the age. It reminds one of famous lines of Amîr Khusrau :

> The people of the world say that Khusrau has
> become an idol-worshipper,
> Aye, aye, I am an idol-worshipper, I do not care
> for the opinion of the World.

Abdur-Rahîm Khān-Khānā's name towered high among the literati of that age. He was a versatile genius of liberal propensities. Himself a poet, he was also a great patron and admirer of poets. He rewarded them munificently. He gave to Mullāh Nûrî his weight in gold ; he took Mullāh Hayātî to his treasury and asked him to carry away as much money as he could ; Mullāh Shauqî was also taken to the treasury and asked to fill the lapel of his cloak with gold coins. Kēshava Dāsa, an eminent Hindi poet, has praised him lavishly in his *Jahāṅgîr Jas Chandrikā*. He has compared him to the holy water of the Ganges. He had acquired complete mastery over the Hindi language and diction, and many poetic compositions are attributed to him. Tradition relates that once he gave to the poet Gaṅga 36 lacs of rupees for a single verse.

Bîrbal's name is associated with many witty remarks. He too was a poet and was nearer to the heart of the illustrious Emperor than any other courtier. He met with a tragic death in the Yûsuf Zai campaign.

In striking contrast was Mullā Abdul Qādir Badāûnî, a vitriolic critic of the Emperor. He had been brought up in a severely orthodox fashion. He had command over terse and epigrammatic style. He vented his wrath upon unbelief, but he did not make a fetish of race, family or blue-blood. Whatever might have been his cherished religious ideals, he knew which side to butter the bread. At the Emperor's wish he translated into Persian *Singhāsana Battîsî*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* the *Māhābhārata* and some selections from the *Rajatarangiṇi*, a history of Kashmîr.

Though not directly connected with the Court, Habbah Khātûn of Kashmîr breathes a spirit of identity with the spirit of the age. She was extraordinarily intelligent and refined by nature. Her sorrow burst into songs, because there was a rift between her and her husband. A poetess and a musician, she possessed a sweet voice. According to Professor Muhibbul Hasan, she capativated the heart of Yûsuf Shāh who built for her resorts in Gulmarg, Sonmarg and other beautiful spots, which reminds one of a similar romance between Bāz Bahādur and Rûpamatî during the reign of Akbar. In her very life time, her name had passed into a legend. She may be described as the Mîrābāî of Kashmîr.

Among other Persian poets connected with the imperial court mention may be made of Urfî who is placed by Badāûnî above Faizî. According to him, there in no street or market in which the roadside book-sellers do not sell copies of his Dewan. According to one tradition, he had fallen in love with the prince Salîm. He was a protègè of Hakîm Abdul Fath Gîlānî who commended him to Abdur-Rahîm Khān Khānā. Some of his couplets breathe the spirit of love which was the characteristic feature of that age. A few verses may be quoted :

> "Nobody has been born who can bear the pangs of love;
> Every affected one has betrayed himself by changing the colour of his face as he descibed his experience.
>
> As I sing of love I weep bitterly,
> I am but an ignorant child and this is my first lesson.
> How shall I endure my desire for my beloved, for by the laws of love

A mere glance is disrespect and a thought of the beloved
is derogatory to her.
The Kābāh would have circled round thy head and
circumambulated it
Had it but passions and wings."

Ghazalî was the first poet laureate of the court of Akbar. Although Badāûnî does not rank him high, he was unrivalled in the depth of understanding and sweetness of language. He was soaked in Sûfî ideology. He composed several dîwāns and mathnawîs. His strain of thought may be glanced from the following lines :

If in the Kābāh, thy heart wanders towards any, besides
(the Lord of Kābāh)
The worship is no more than wickedness, and the Kābāh
to thee is no more than idol temple.
But if thy heart is fixed on God, even though thou
dwellest in a wineshop.
Drink wine fearlessly, thy end would be naught but
good.
We fear not death, but our misfortune is
That we must remain disappointed of the regard
of the lovely ones of this world.
The cloak of a zealct is stretched over his bent body like
a string in a bow,
But the debauchee fears not the arrows of his prayers."

Pairavî, whom Badāûnî styles as a skilful painter and in poetry an imitator, is permeated with the love of form, another name for *Saguṇa Bhakti*. Says he,

"O Lord, I am unable to grasp the hidden truth ;
Forgive me, for I am too much of a worshipper of the
outward form,
Of thy grace, O most pure God.
How is the wine of love given to him who suffers no pain.
Love for the beautiful is a state of exhilaration
To whose lot does it fall ?
I steal a glance at that graceful one,

And when she looks towards me, I look downwards to
the ground in shame.
I am perturbed when she is away from me
Lest my moon-faced darling should fall in love with
somebody else."

Tausanî's real name was Manōhara. He was the son of Rājā Lōna Karana of Sāmbhara. He was extremely beautiful and gifted with an extraordinary intellect, He was called Mirzā Manōhara. His line of thought may be gleaned from the following verses :

"The Sheikh is boastful of his religion, the Brāhmaṇa
brags of his idolatory.
(But) He who is intoxicated with the beauty of his beloved
has naught to do with idolatory of religion."

Jafar Bēg Qazvînî, though hard pressed for time because of his official preoccupations as the paymaster, has delineated the pangs of his love-sick heart in the following lines :

"If like the moth, I fly in distraction round thy candle,
O obstinate one,
My presumptuous flight will at length land me in death.
I must write a letter concerning my grief to her who
possesses my heart,
The grief of my heart is great, I must write to my love
concerning it.
A rose has blossomed in the garden afresh,
For last night the nightingale slept not till the morning."

The above lines clearly reveal the impact of pure Indian similes and metaphors on Persian poetry of this age. The tradition of communicating to the beloved the pangs of heart through a missive is depicted in Indian sculptural art as well as in mythology.

In short, the court poets sang of love and beauty not in the standardised Persian phraseology of the rose and nightingale, but they also absorbed the Indian background of poetry of this type. Persian is a sweet language, capable of expressing emotion in terms of abandon, and in this respect it stands on par

with the Braja Bhāṣa, through which a host of poets superbly and effectively gave vent to their pangs of love and delineated ideal forms of beauty. But before elaborating this aspect, it is necessary to advert to another interesting development.

It has been noted above that Akbar directed his deliberate and conscious efforts at establishing wholesome ethical, spiritual, and political values, the combined effect of which produced stability and security of life which in its turn enabled the statesmen and men of letters to give expression to their genius, and to indulge in idealism and practices of the highest type. It may be repeated that in Akbar the country had found an ideal ruler in flesh and blood who deserved and commanded the right esteem of the masses and classes alike. Though to the orthodox Hindû mind the existing conditions fell short of Rāmarājya, they were neither disappointing nor depressing. A living sovereign indirectly influenced the trend of the indigenous Hindû religious thought. Add to this the declining fervour of Nirguṇavāda. The Universalism of Kabîra and Nānaka had deteriorated into sectarianism. Moreover, neither of the two saints, in spite of his firm faith in an attributeless supreme reality, could totally discard the Saguṇa phraseology. Kabîra has visualised Rāma as different from the son of Dasharatha, but Rāma did find a place in his ideology and teachings. And the same may be said of Nānaka. Jāyasî represents the waning phase of the pseudo-vēdānta wave. The consequential reaction was the rise of Saguṇavāda which had a long history behind it. Again, in an atmosphere surcharged with emotion, love in a vacuum could not be cultivated. It required a visible symbol, which could be either of Rāma or of Krishṇa and their personalities, though transcendental, had to be delineated in perfect human forms. The attraction of physical beauty was deemed to be an inevitable step towards the appreciation of supernatural and superhuman beauty. In other words, the process now advocated was to rise from the worship of the visible to the devotion to the invisible, from the physical to the transcendental. Even some Muslim Sûfîs followed this practice. Indeed, it was not a problem of religion at all. It was essentially a psychological problem and the only solution of it could be a psychological one.

In these circumstances there occurred an outburst of Saguṇavāda, which branched off into Rāma *Bhakti* and Krishṇa *Bhakti*. Both these schools inspired a host of poets and philosophers whose contributions have been detailed in a large number of works on Hindi literature. Briefly speaking, Rāma *Bhakti* may be traced from the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki who flourished in hoary antiquity. But his characterisation of Rāma in his work is purely earthly, and he is treated as a perfect human being. Subsequently, about two hundred years after Christ, he was deified as an Avatāra, and this concept was further amplified in the Purāṇas, particularly in the *Mahābhārata* which recognises him as one of the six Avatāras including Krishṇa. His *Bhakti* is elaborated in the Tapniya Upaniṣads. It is not proposed here to deal at length with the origin of the Rāma *Bhakti* cult. This has been scholarly done by Dr. Bulkē in his well-known treatise. Nor is it necessary here to examine the contribution of Tulasîdāsa as a poet or *Bhakta*. Our purpose is to assess the spirit of the age in which he lived and which he stamped with his own personality.

It would be perfectly relevant to note that Tulasîdāsa was consumed with the passion of an ideal god, and he found it in Rāma to whom he surrendered himself just as a loyal servant surrenders himself to his master. To Tulasîdāsa Rāma was the symbol and quintessence of all virtues. His role as a son, as a brother, as a husband, and as a ruler was simply superb. Tulasî speaks again and again of Rāmarājya in which the ruler was just and the people were happy and prosperous. truth-loving and peace-loving. And this was the very ideal pursued by his contemporary sovereign Akbar. His description of court scenes and royal processions echoes the glory and grandeur of the Great Moghul. The very fact that the *Rāmacharitamānasa* has a very large sprinkling of Persian words reveals the influence of contemporary culture on its author. Dr. Bābûrāma Saksēnā has probed into this subject with much ability.

Tulasîdāsa was a prolific writer. Though not interested in politics, he does refer to the contemporary political conditions and principles of politics. But he appears to be obsessed with the concept of *Kaliyuga* and the dominance of the *Yavan*. When he says that a saintly and benevolent king has in him

some divine element, he echoes the dictum of Abul Fazl that the ruler is a ray of Divine light. And when he says that a ruler's policy should be based on discrimination, fear, state craft and punishment, he unwittingly portrays the character of Akbar.

Tulasîdāsa left no sphere of human life untouched. Philosophy, religion, society, literature, all fall within his purview, and he does not hesitate to give candid expression to his views. He was thus a beacon-light illuminating the heart and soul of mankind. He has left a legacy which has proved inspiring and exhilarating to successive generations. The *Rāmacharitamānasa* has become the Bible of the Hindû masses. It inspires the literate and illiterate alike. It has accorded food for thought to all and sundry. It enshrines the highest ideals and enjoins the simplest practices. It resounds with the spirit of the age. And, verily, Tulasîdāsa was one of the architects of his age. But the faith which he propounded, though not devoid of depth, lacked the fervour of emotion, the silver link between the lover and the beloved. His Rāma has a stern code of moral conduct and strict ethical standards. He is to be feared and venerated, but he cannot be loved. And love was the passion and mood of that age.

The Sûfîs filled this gap among the Muslims and Vallabha and Chaitanya filled it among the Hindûs. To them Krishṇa was an ideal object of love because of his effulgent beauty and charming grace. The relationship between Krishṇa and his devotees was to be through the silken chord of love. To a Krishṇite as to a sûfî love was an all consuming, all absorbing passion. Every fibre of his body was to pulsate with it. Vallabha formulated a philosophy which was portrayed in the musical compositions of Sûradāsa. According to him, love was a sacred and secret relationship between the lover and the beloved. It was not to be divulged. Hence he discouraged worship in the temples. On the other hand, he installed forms or *swarûpas* in his own residence (*havēlî*) and propounded the theory that, because of its separation from the supreme reality, the individual soul becomes lank and weak. It can recover its lost vigour through the grace of the Lord.

Vallabha formulated his philosophy in a land which was

traditionally the land of the sport or *leelā* of Shrî Krishṇa who behaved on terms of equality with his playmates, male and female alike. The *Bhāgawata* which has been much misunderstood, portrays the *leelās* of the Lord, but his dalliance with the gōpîs should be interpreted, not in the physical sense, but in the ethereal and spiritual sense. The doubt aroused by this dalliance has been fully clarified by the author when it was raised by Rājā Parîkshita. In the early medieval period Jayadēva and Vidyāpati had clarified emotionalism. Jayadēva has, in the *Gîta-Gōvinda*, presented a charming and attractive picture of Rādhā in words which scintillate with pleasant pain caused by the arrows of Cupid. His successor Vidyāpati improved upon the theme by adding to it further the elements of ornamentation and eroticism. His lilting musical strains make Rādhā and Krishṇa the most refined symbols of love.

With this background Krishṇa *Bhakti* reasserted itself. So far as its erotic aspect is concerned, it betrays the influence of Sûfî poetry. The illustrious poet Hāfiz in the very first poem of his dîwān has painted an arresting picture of the object of his love and worship. Subsequent Persian poets wrote of love in the same strain. Some of their verses have been quoted above. When we compare them with similar verses in the Hindi erotic poetry of the 16th century their mutual influence may be understood fully. But love in the hands of Hindi poets had several variations. Sûradāsa, for example, has devoted his entire attention to portraying the life of Krishṇa as a child : he emphasises *vātsalya*, i.e., love of parents for their child. Tulasîdāsa has also described the childhood of Rāma, but Sûradāsa rises superior to him. He understood the psychology of a child much better than Tulasîdāsa. There is, however, one interesting similarity between the two. When Rāma opened his mouth before Kaushalyā and Krishṇa before Yashōdā, their mothers had a vision of the entire universe. This reflects the influence of the concepts of *Wahdatul Wajûd* and, to some extent, of *Wahdatul Shuhûd*, i.e., unity of existence and unity of immanence.

Sûradāsa has wittingly ridiculed the Nirguṇa concept, not on any rationalistic grounds, but on the basis of his personal experience. As a blind bard he should have favoured

Nirguṇa Brahma, but the inner vision with which he was gifted unfolded to him the living beauty of Shrî Krishṇa. In his *Bhramarageeta*, while depicting the love pangs of the *gōpîs*, he places in the mouth of the latter the following verses :

> In which clime does *Nirguṇa* reside ?
>
> or
>
> Who cares to listen to the legend of the *Nirguṇa* ;
> It is a mere play on words ;
> The *Saguṇa Sumēru* is visible to the naked eye,
> You merely refer to a tiny straw ;
> It neither has form, nor shape, nor colour. You explain it to us,
> Speak the truth, did you ever see its vision ?

How beautifully has the blind poet described the need for separation :

> My eyes have planted the creeper of separation,
> Oh ! my dear friend, my tears irrigate it, its roots have gone deep down.
>
> or
>
> Oh sweet forest ! who do you remain green ;
> Why do you not burn down with the fire of separation from Shyāma Sundara.

Likewise Nandadāsa also stressed *Saguṇa Bhakti*. An interesting story is related about him in the *Dō Sau Bāwan Vaiṣṇavōṅ Kî Vārtā* (Anecdotes of 252 Vaiṣṇavas). While on his way to Dwārkā, the poet was irresistibly attracted towards a beautiful woman of the Khatrî caste and began to roam about her house. Disgusted at his behaviour, the members of her family left with her for Gōkula ; but Nandadāsa followed her. Ultimately Gōswāmî Viṭṭhalanātha cured him of this madness, and he became a Krishṇa *Bhakta*. Whatever be the modicum of truth in the incident, it emphatically illustrates the truth of the principle that love for physical beauty is the first step towards devotion to transcendental beauty. To the poets of the Aṣṭachhāpa group Krishṇa symbolised the highest form of beauty which could be enjoyed through an abandon of emotion, emotion as distinguished from passion. This was in consonance with the contemporary beliefs of the Sûfîs.

The area called Braja was contiguous to Delhi and Āgrā, and it should not be surprising if there was constant exchange of ideas between the two regions. Vallabhāchārya and his immediate successors had a number of disciples from amongst the Hindû nobility of Akbar, and even some Muslim nobles looked upon them with feelings of reverence and respect. In fact, Vallabha did not feel shy of enrolling Muslims among his followers. Thus in striking contrast to the feelings about *Kaliyuga* and the exploitation by the *Yavana* rulers expressed by Tulasîdāsa, was the position of the *Vaiṣṇava Bhaktas*. It was Tulasî's orthodoxy which inspired such views; they did not correspond with the real situation. And there is no doubt that the Persian language was adding continuously to the vocabulary of Hindi and was enriching it with grace and dignity.

Braja was traditionally the land of milk and honey, of music and dance, of joy and gaiety, and of dalliance and sport. The atmosphere there was in tune with the new spirit of mirth which was radiating from the imperial court. Akbar and his courtiers did not refrain from indulging in the lighter side of life. They observed Hindû festivals like Holî, Deepāvalî, Rakshā-Bandhana, and Vasanta. The emperor extended his patronage to the art of painting. At his initiative it received a new vigour and vitality and was looked upon both as a means of study and as an amusement. Abul Fazl has given the names of 14 master painters, of whom 4 were Muslims and the rest Hindûs. The emperor took deep interest in the illustrations of the *Mahābhārata*, the Persian version of which was called *Razunnāmāh*. Gray remarks that "the impression which these paintings make as a whole is first of teeming richness...and secondly of the overwhelmingly Indian character of the style." Besides miniature paintings, the mural art also fired the imagination of the emperor. The interior walls of his palace were decorated with paintings, both Indian and Persian. Fragments thereof in Fatēhpur Sîkrî, which have survived the ravages of time and nature, reveal their grandeur. Indeed, according to Dr. Ashîrvādî Lāl, the Moghul style became the national style of painting. Its wholesome influence on the indigenous style was far-reaching.

India has specialised in the field of architecture, and the Turco-Afghāns had to yield to Indian genius. Timûr was

thrilled with the beauty and magnificence of Indian buildings and he carried away a large number of craftsmen and artisans to decorate his capital Samarkand. Bābur was charmed at the sight of the buildings of Gwālior, which were pre-eminently of Hindû design, and he strove hard to create Gwālior at Dhōlpur. But Akbar towered higher above his illustrious predecessors. He gave expression to his catholic ideas through the medium of red-stone. The complex at Fatēhpur Sîkrî is illustrative of unity in diversity. The emperor had a deep faith in the dictum of *Sulah-Kul*, i.e., peace with all. And verily he was at peace with Hindûs, Muslims, Pārsees, Jains, and Christians alike. If on the one side is the sober but delightful mausoleum of Sheikh Salîm Chishtî, on the other is the highly embellished Turkish Sultāna's palace exuberantly rich in carvings and floral designs. The *Khās Mahal*, though a simple structure, was most gorgeously decorated from top to bottom. The *Panch Mahal* built after the style of a Buddhist pagoda, and the Mariam's house stand in striking contrast to each other. The first is a lofty structure of several storeys, each of the upper one diminishing in dimensions as compared to the lower. The second was called *Sunehrā Makāna* or the Golden House, because its walls and doors were embellished in paintings done in gold and silver. Among the paintings one is of Lord Krishṇa with flowers in both hands, an unmistakable proof of the influence of Braja. Bîrbal's house and the so-called Jōdhābāî's palace feast human eyes with their complicated and elaborate trelliswork. To preserve and perpetuate his dominance the emperor also built strong and magnificent fort-palaces at Āgrā, Allāhābād, and Lāhore, each of which is a marvel of structural skill. Likewise the emperor was a great patron of music. Tān Sēn was the famous court musician. He was a disciple of Bābā Hari Dāsa. Abul Fazl has given a list of 36 musicians. They were divided into seven groups; each group entertained the emperor once a week. Muslims also began to learn Hindû music, and this was how the *gharānās* came into existence.

In the foregoing description more space has been devoted to the details of the glory and grandeur of the Great Moghul, but there is ample justification for it. The age could be proud of only two individuals, one a great saint-poet and the other a

liberal sovereign. Both of them cast a spell on the mind of the people and were deemed to be ideals in their respective spheres of activity. Both of them had inherited a rich legacy of ideals and practices which they moulded in their own way to suit the spirit of the age. If Tulasîdāsa had his hand on the pulse of popular religious beliefs, Akbar with his unparalleled acumen understood and appreciated the secular propensities of his subjects.

As has been stressed in the beginning, forces and tendencies from every direction were converging on a single point, viz., of making life religious, secular, and worth living. In this respect human values were being revised on the basis of universalism, eschewing parochial and sectarian considerations. The empire included a vast area from Afghānistān to Bengāl, from Kashmîr to some portions of Ahmadnagar, and thus opend out a vast field for the action and interaction of ideas. If Vallabhāchārya developed his *Puṣṭi-Mārga* in the land of Braja, Chaitanya propagated his faith in *Mādhurya-Bhāva* in the eastern regions. He was the very embodiment of love. To him Lord Krishṇa appeared only in one hue, and that was the colour of love. Unlike Vallabha, Chaitanya, though originally a Vēdāntist, did not formulate any philosophy, because he did not believe in giving a justification for his faith which was based on emotion. Like some of the Sûfîs, he depended upon intuition of emotional exhilaration. In moods of ecstasy he would begin to sing and dance and very often lose all consciousness. His faith was spontaneous and unsophisticated. He did not preach, he only practised. He observed no distinction of caste or creed, so that some of his near and dear ones were Muslims who had turned Viṣṇavites.

It is a remarkable phase of our history that in this age devotion to Krishṇa became a universal phenomenon, a living passion, an unquenchable thirst and sanctified emotion. Be it Sûra of Braja, or Mîrābāî of Rājasthān, or Narsî Mēhtā of Gujarāt or Ekanātha of Mahārāṣṭra, they all sang of the love of Lord Krishṇa. The trend was catching and even Muslims began to write lyrical verses in praise of Krishṇa. Of these, Rasakhāna gained immense popularity. As a poet he had full command over Braja Bhāṣā and also over myths and legends associated with Lord Krishṇa. Krishṇa worship extended as far

as Kērala in the South where Srî Rangan was a centre of Krishṇa worship.

To sum up, the Age of Tulasîdāsa had some very unique features. Firstly, it was creative and not imitative. It could boast of the originality of ideas relating to all aspects of life. Secondly, it was assimilative and integrative because never before, or after, in our history such a fusion of cultures had occurred. Thirdly, it was an age of universal values. The intellectual activity was not confined to one region or one community; it embraced within its fold all communities and regions. Tulasîdāsa preached for every class and Akbar protected the interests of all creeds and castes. He invited to his court Christians, Pārsees, Jains, Jōgîs, and Mullās in order to understand their outlook on spiritual problems. He even made a bold attempt to establish what may be called a "theosophical society", although it did not survive him. Fourthly, it was an age of balance between secularism and spiritualism. It is true that the common man could not shake off the shackles of convention, but the peaceful atmosphere did cheer him up. Hindûs no longer suffered from humiliating restrictions, and some of them rose to the highest rungs of the administrative ladder. Fifthly, it was an age of affluence and morals. There was a distinct improvement in the morals and material standards of life because of the introduction of a uniform system of administration which as much strengthened the overall discipline of life as it promoted the legitimate interests of people as a whole. And, finally, it was an age in which medieval culture rose to the highest point of refinement and utility. Indeed, it was a golden age in the history of the sub-continent.

The socio-political atmosphere in which Tulasîdâsa's genius fructified is also deserving of consideration, because the cultural tendencies of a specific age are conditioned as much by the changing politics as by the social milieu. In this context it may be remarked that the opening of the sixteenth century witnessed for about two decades the working of centripetal forces under the leadership of Sultān Sikandar Lōdî who, though an offspring of a goldsmith's daughter and supporter of orthodoxy, represented in his person both conservative and liberal spirit. In his blood ran two streams, Hindû through his

mother, and Afghān through his father Bahlul Lōdî. In his political outlook he was a hard-baked despot, but in his secular dealings he was not so intolerant as he has been made out to be. He was a man of wide culture, interested in literature and poetry. He composed verses under the pen-name of Gulrukh or rose-faced. Indeed, he was very handsome, and there is a tradition that a sûfî saint fell in love with him and had to pay with his life for his temerity. It is said that he came into contact with Nānaka also. But when he died in 1517 A.D., the Lōdî empire which had been founded by his father Bahlul and had been nurtured by him with unrelenting efforts, was overtaken by a political storm which swept clean of its existence. This was the beginning of a new era which witnessed peace and turmoil in an alternating sequence. Bābur laid the foundations of the Moghul empire, but his spectacular success was followed by unprecedented chaos. His son and successor Humāyûṅ failed, for various reasons, to rise up to the situation and was hounded out of India and compelled to seek protection and refuge in Persia whose ruler, Shāh Tahmasp, not only received him with open arms but also placed at his disposal a well-equipped army. With its help the exiled sovereign regained his foothold in Qāndhār and Kābul, though his position was constantly threatened by his restless brother Kāmarān, the "black sheep" of the Chaghtāî family.

After Humāyûṅ's departure, the Afghān leader Shēr Shāh, a born genius, united and integrated almost the whole of Northern India under his sceptre. Within a brief span of time he initiated and implemented reforms touching almost every phase of life. He was a son of the soil and understood the propensities of his subjects as none before him could do. Though the empire which he had built up proved to be ephemeral, the institutions which he organised not only outlived him, but became the basis of the future administrative set-up. The political structure established by him remained intact under his immediate successor Islām Shāh, but after the latter's death it gradually crumbled to pieces. The Afghān insurgence once more raised its head and a number of rival leaders made their appearance in the political arena. They seized small tracts of territory which had once owed allegiance to the central authority

of the Sûr sovereign. Thus political confusion became worse confounded, and there was none to salvage the country.

This was Humāyûṅ's opportunity. By this time he gained his equanimity of mind. Since his brothers had disappeared, he had no more fear of rivals. He pounced upon the Punjāb, conquered it, and occupied Delhi and Āgrā. But he was not destined either to enjoy the fruits of his success or to recover all of his lost possessions in Northern India. He met death which was as tragic as it was sudden. Stanley Lane-Poole has aptly summarised his life in a cryptic sentence : "Humāyûṅ tumbled into life and tumbled out of it." He passed on to his infant successor the halo of the glory associated with the house of Timûr, but no empire worth the name. So Akbar became an emperor without an empire. Fortunately, he had in the person of his *Ataliq* (Protector) Bairam Khān a devoted and loyal adviser fully conversant with the existing situation and prompt in taking steps to improve the same. The crown which was placed on the head of the child Akbar held out prospects of greatness; but by no stretch of imagination could it, at the moment, be dreamt to be an object of envy.

For almost a decade, according to Abul Fazl, Akbar remained "behind the veil", watching, assessing and thinking furiously. Very skilfully he got rid of the dominance of his *Ataliq*, only, according to Vincent Smith, to fall into the hands of the ladies of the royal *harem*. During this interval his innate genius began to mature fast and, though illiterate, he beat hollow many a seasoned politician and many an adept in Muslim theology. His intellectual acumen was unique. He was a man of highly developed imagination and possessed at the same time of an intensely practical outlook. He has been described as an insatiable expansionist who planned his schemes ambitiously and executed them with meticulous care. His political achievements were the marvel of the age in which he lived. He placed before himself a bold programme of integration of Northern India and made assiduous efforts to implement the same. Unlike Alāuddîn Khiljî, he did not dream of world conquest, but very much like Chandra Gupta or Samudra Gupta, he aimed at winning the title of *Chakravartin*. He completely identified himself with the land which was to be the arena of his restless

activity for about half a century. He conquered Mālwā, Gujarāt, Sindh, Kashmîr, Bihār, Bengāl, and Orîssā. He annexed the sûbāh of Kābul after the death of his half-brother Mirzā Hamîm. He seized Qāndhār. He then moved towards the south, partially reduced to submission the declining kingdom of Ahmadnagar and annexed Khāndēsh. In this way he completed his scheme of conquest of Northern India. He won the loyalty of the various states of Rājasthān both by persuasion and coercion. Indeed, this was the brightest chapter of his political activity. It had far-reaching consequences.

Though the sword could conquer, it could not consolidate. The political unification of Northern India was buttressed by the Great Moghul by a number of reforms, military, revenue, and social. He improved upon the legacy of Shēr Shāh in the field of land-revenue administration. The *Zabtî* system was scientifically elaborated, but it was not the only system which was current. The *ghallabuxi* and *nasq* systems also were in operation to suit the convenience of the agriculturists in various parts of the empire. Thus a uniform system of administration created conditions for facilitating a common approach to the problems of life. Add to this the benevolent and paternal attitude of the sovereign who by a single stroke of pen abolished the dual citizenship which had for centuries past been a cancer in the political system. By abolishing the pilgrim tax and *jaziā*, he placed his subjects on an equal footing. He did away with discrimination in the state service and took the bold step of throwing open service to talent. This was an unprecedented measure which betokened not only the impartial outlook of the emperor, but also his unbounded concern for the people. It is true that he did not establish a welfare state, but he strove hard to identify the interests of the state with those of the people. Judged by contemporary standards, it was as radical a step as it was judicious and proper.

Prior to the advent of Akbar, both official and non-official historians took pleasure in depicting the Turkish state as Muslim state, although facts do not prove to the contrary. Autocracy and Islām are contradiction in terms, and although the rulers outwardly professed the Islāmic faith, the majority of them did not care to establish an ideal Muslim State. Even

the rabid communalist like Ziāuddîn Barani has drawn a line of distinction between *dîndārî* (promotion of religion) and *jahāṅdārî* (development of the State). Before Akbar, Zainal Abidin, a famous ruler of Kashmîr, had striven hard to establish a secular State and a similar experiment had been made in Bengāl. But Akbar out-did all his predecessors. During his regime, primarily because of the spirit of the age, the secular concept of state bloomed in all its fullness.

The new political pattern was bound to and it did react on society. Contemporary Hindi literature from Jāisî onward boldly reflects this change. There is a common adage, 'Like master, like man.' In consonance with it when the Moghul emperor began to celebrate Hindû and Muslim festivals with equal enthusiasm, the people did not lag behind. Moreover, more than three centuries of close association between the two major communities had rubbed off to a large extent their sharp edges of discord and had created a common understanding between them. Add to this the influence of the new converts. They had changed their faith but not their ways of life, so that Hindû social customs and ceremonies found an easy way into Muslim community which could not escape even the impact of the caste system. Just as among the Hindûs marriages were permissible only within the same caste, similarly marriages among the Muslims were normally performed within the same sects or tribes. And this practice in a certain measure obtains even today. There were some *Rājpût* converts who retained their original Hindû customs. Among the *Qain-Khani* Muslims, till recently, the marriage ceremony was first performed by a *Pandit* and after that the *Nikāh* was performed by a *Maulvî*. In certain districts of the Panjāb Hindû-Muslim marriages had become very common with this proviso only that if the Muslim wife of a Hindû died, she would be buried, or if the Hindû wife of a Muslim died she would be cremated. Inter-religious marriages were not confined to the royalty and nobility alone, but the practice had filtered into the masses of some regions also. The advent of Vallabhāchārya and Chaitanya provided further impetus to Hindû-Muslim unity.

But India was not inhabited by Hindûs and Muslims alone. There were other religious communities also. The Pārsees

and Christians were dotted over the coastline. It is true that in matters socio-religious the former continued to retain their exclusiveness, but they had completely identified themselves with the land of their adoption. Their importance may be judged from the fact that Akbar invited a number of Zoroastrian priests to expound their religious views, and he adopted some of their religious formulas. Similarly, he also invited the Jesuit fathers from Gōā to explain to him the tenets of Christianity, and it was in his time that the Bible was for the first time translated into Persian. In this context, it would be worthwhile to remember that the Jesuits were implacable enemies of the Muslims whom they relentlessly persecuted. But the Great Moghul, in his search for truth, overlooked this fact and held free discussions with them, so much so that he created an impression on their minds that he was in a mood to turn a Christian, but he proved too elusive for them, though he permitted the Fathers to build a Church at Āgrā. Like Islām, Christianity also could not escape the impact of the caste system. In the South Brāhmaṇa and non-Brāhmaṇa Christians remained separate from each other. In short, the structure of society was passing through changes, though they were imperceptible. It is a fact that among the Hindûs new sub-castes were coming up, but this did not disturb the even tenor of life.

What was curious was that although society was split up into compartments both horizontally and vertically on the basis of caste and religion, it was surcharged with the spirit of fellow feeling. Hindûs and Muslims did not inter-dine and normally did not inter-marry, but individual examples of friendship and mutual sympathy were numerous. In the famous battle of Khandavā, Rāṇā Sāṅgā had taken up the cause of Sultān Mahmûd Lōdî, and there was a large number of Afghāns fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Rājpûts. Indeed, for many years to come the Moghuls were regarded as strangers in striking contrast to the Afghāns who were deemed to be the sons of the soil. In Bihār the distinction between the Afghāns and Hindûs had considerably dwindled, and the same holds true of the other regions of Northern India. The so-called Muslim States of the Deccan had gone a step further. Their

administration was packed with *Marāṭhās*, and their cultural outlook had become strikingly Indian. Although they maintained relations with Persia and there was a large influx of Persian poets and scholars in their Courts, this did not change the pro-Indian attitude of the rulers. It is also worth-noting that what is called the Deccanî Urdu flourished in the kingdom of Gōlacuṇḍā. Its literature is full of purely Indian themes.

Religion was still the bed-rock of society, though its rigidity had considerably narrowed. To the fact that the fourfold division of Hindû life had completely disappeared Tulasîdāsa bears ample testimony. He says that in his time it had become a common practice for men of low birth to abandon their hearths and homes and to become *sannyāsî*. Similarly, among the common Muslims *Shara* was not strictly adhered to. In fact, among the Muslim Sûfîs there were some *be-Shara* orders which had become popular. During this period of social revolution it was difficult to retain and sustain old values. A compromise between tradition and the new outlook was the crying need, to which all classes of society, excluding the unrelenting orthodox groups among the various communities, readily responded.

As regards the lighter side of life, although fairs and festivals were observed according to religion by Hindûs and Muslims alike, the practice of common participation was fast developing. In the processions of *taziās* both Hindûs and Muslims set up *sabîls* where water and syrup was served as an act of faith. In the same way *Dashaharā*, *Dîpāwalî*, and *Basant* were observed with great zeal and enthusiasm. Both among Hindûs and Muslims the marriage ceremony afforded an opportunity for pomp and display. Processions to the accompaniment of music and dance were taken out and coins were showered on the bride and bridegroom.

Nor were the masses and classes indifferent to games and sports. Chess, *ganjifā*, *chaupaṛ*, *chandal mandal*, and disc were played both by the rich and the poor. In rural areas *gulti*, racing of sheep, goats, etc. were the most common forms of amusement, and so were *kabaḍḍî*, kite-flying, and pigeon-flying. Chaugān was played only by the well-to-do. Life was lived with zest, and although there were occasions when it was

marred by sorrow and grief, e.g., when there was scanty rainfall or when an epidemic broke out, for various reasons such calamities were not always widespread. There was sufficient stock of food to eat and there were mud-and-thatch houses in which to dwell. But this was common all over the world. Even Vincent Smith has admitted that living in the sixteenth century was comparatively much cheaper. Exploitation is the gift of the Industrial Age and industrial society. Its existence cannot be altogether denied, but its dimensions and incidence were much smaller and lighter.

In short, in spite of the doleful cry of Tulasîdāsa that his age was *Kaliyuga*, people on the whole lived a contented life.

4
Biographical Sketch

THE LATE PROF. MĀTĀ PRASĀD GUPTA

Date of birth

In the works of Tulasîdāsa, we have no internal evidence whatever that might help us to determine the poet's date of birth with any degree of certainty. There is, however, an isolated line in *Rāma Muktāvalî* which led the late Jagan Mōhan Vermā to conclude that the poet lived to attain the mature age of a hundred-and-twenty years and should, therefore, have been born in 1503 A.D.[1] The author of these lines has thoroughly examined *Rāma Muktāvalî*, the poetic style, ideology, and the metrical arrangement of which compel him to reject the attribution of the work to Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa.

There is, again, no contemporary evidence in respect of his date of birth. We have, therefore, no choice except to fall back upon some long-cherished traditions in the matter. Unfortunately, even the traditions are not identical.

One of the traditions is enshrined in *Mānasamayanka* and *Mûla Gōsāîncharita*, which contend that the poet was born in 1497 A.D.[2] If this date is accepted, we are faced with the

1. *Saraswatî*, Vol. 20, p. 77.
2. *Mānasamayanka*, p. 11. *Mûla Gōsāîncharita*, Couplet 2. The *Charita* also gives an elaborate elucidation of the date, but this elucidation is proved incorrect by mathematical calculations.

following corollaries : the poet was 77 years of age when he commenced the composition of his *Rāmacharitamānasa* (1574 A.D.), that he was 87 at the time of copying (1584 A.D.) the *Uttara Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* which is now in the custody of Saraswatî Bhawan, Kāshî, and that he was hundred and fifteen years old when the lines at the head of the *Panchāyatanāma*—now in the custody of 'Kāshirāja'—were composed (1669 Vik.). None of these, however, appears to be probable. The tradition that fixes the year of his birth as 1554 Vik. or 1497 A.D., does not, therefore, sound plausible.

Wilson—and following him Tassy[1]—have held that the poet started composing his *Mānasa* at the age of thirty-one. His year of birth should thus be 1600 Vik. or 1543 A.D. This also does not appear to be convincing, because it is improbable that such a learned and profound work as this should have been commenced at the rather immature age of 31—more so because he lost his parents when he was a mere child and must have been confronted, at that early age, with the hard realities of finding sustenance and subsistence for himself.

Shrî Shiva Singh Sēṅgar has averred that "the saint was born about the year 1583 Vik. or 1526 A.D."[2] It is often believed that Shrî Sēṅgar has based his observations on the *Gōsāîṅcharita*, but the use of the word 'about' in his statement belies this belief. As such, we can only infer that Sēṅgar has mentioned the date either on the strength of some tradition or on the basis of mere conjecture. Even so, this date does not in any way seem improbable because the objections mentioned earlier do not hold good in its case.

Perhaps on the strength of a more incontrovertible evidence, Dr. Grierson holds : "It is clear from the most reliable accounts that the poet was born in 1589 of the Vikrami era."[3] He does not, however, indicate what these 'reliable accounts' are. It is stated that the late Rāmgulām Dwivedî, who believed himself to be in the lineage of Tulasîdāsa's disciples, also believed this to be his date of birth.[4] Another important

1. Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la litterature Hindouie et Hindoustanie*, Vol. III, p. 236.
2. *Shiv Singh Saroja*, p. 427.
3. *Indian Antiquary*, 1893, A.D., p. 264.
4. *Tulasî Granthāvalî*, Vol. III, p. 18.

support for this date comes from Tulasî Sāhib of Hāthras who proclaims Tuesday, *Bhādōṅ Sudî* 11, 1589 Vik. i.e. 1532 A.D., to be the poet's birthday.[1] Calculations prove the date to be perfectly in order. We may, therefore, accept this as Tulasîdāsa's date of birth.

Place of birth

Quite numerous are also the differences in respect of the poet's place of birth.[2] There is no entry in his works nor any other internal evidence capable of throwing definitive light on this controversial question.

Pt. Chandrabali Pāṇḍēy quotes the following verses from *Kavitāvalî* : "Tulasî tihārō gharajāyō hai ghara kō"[3]—i.e., Tulasî has been born in your own region—and concludes: "Undoubtedly Tulasîdāsa's native place was somewhere in Oudh, and so was also his birth-place."[4]

The question that poses itself here is: "How widely inclusive is the import of the word 'ghara' occurring in the quotation ?" Can it be taken to mean the entire province of Oudh ? A similar quotation from Kabîra is interesting :

'Kahi Kabîra gulāma ghara kā Jiāi bhāvai mārî'[5]

Kabîra might have been born in Banāras or Magahara, but it may be said with all certainty that his native place was not Oudh, nor was he born anywhere in that province. Being opposed to the idea of incarnation, he could not even establish any emotional link therewith as Tulasîdāsa did. One feels hesitant, therefore, to agree to Shrî Pāṇḍēy's interpretation of the verses quoted above.

In like manner, Shrî Rajanî Kānt Shāstrî quotes the following verse from *Vinayapatrikā* :

"Diyō sukula janama sarîra sundara hētu jō phala chāri

1. *Ghaṭa Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 45.
2. See Mātā Prasād Gupta, *Tulasîdāsa*, Appendix, pp. 516 ff.
3. *Kavitāvalî*, Uttara K., 122.
4. Chandrabali Pāṇḍēy, *Tulasîdāsa*, p. 24.
5. *Santa Kabîra*, ed. Rām Kumār Vermā, p. 72.

kō"[1] i.e. "God has given you birth in a noble family (or amongst the Shuklas) and blessed you with a comely body"— and suggests that Tulasîdāsa was born on the bank of the Gaṅgā. Quoting further the following 'sōraṭhā' of the *Mānasa* :

> "Mukti janmamahi jāni, gyāna-khāni, aghhāni-kara !"[2]
> "Know the land of salvation to be my birth-place,
> The land that is an abode of learning and destroyer of sins !"

He considers 'mukti-janmamahi' to be a copulative compound, thus meaning 'Kāshî' which eventually becomes Tulasîdāsa's native place. There are, however, some verses in *Kavitāvalî* which conclusively negative the claim not only of Banāras (Kāshî) but of all other places lying on the bank of the Gaṅgā anywhere.[3]

Till recently only Hājîpur, Tārî, and Rājāpur claimed to be the poet's native place, but now there is another claimant, viz., Sōrōṅ. Hājîpur, a town near Chitrakûṭa, was first mentioned by Wilson on the basis of some tradition.[4] This was followed by Garcin de Tassy who also supported the claim of Hājîpur. This, too, had the backing of some popular tradition only.

Without dissipating our energy on others, we shall examine the arguments and evidences advanced by the supporters of the claims of Rājāpur and Sōrōṅ only. Although none of these claimants has put forward any conclusive set of evidences, the majority of them, however, seem to be in favour of Rājāpur on the strength of available data.

Tulasîdāsa and Rājāpur

The arguments in favour of the claim of Rājāpur were first enlisted in detail by Pt. Rām Bahōrî Shukla who himself belonged to that place. These are reproduced almost verbatim hereunder :

(1) "Ṭhākur Shiva Singh Sēṅgar, Pandit Rāmgulām Dwivēdî and many of the earlier commentators of the *Mānasa*

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 135.
2. *Mānasa*, Kishkindhā, beginning.
3. *Kavitā*, Uttara, 166 and 167.
4. *A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 41.

concede the pride of place to Rājāpur and accept it as Gōswāmîjî's birth-place."

(2) "Sant Tulasî Sāhib (1820-1900 Vik.), proclaiming himself as an incarnation of the author of the *Mānasa*, affirms in his *Ghaṭa Rāmāyaṇa* that he was born at Rājāpur in that previous birth."

(3) "In Rājāpur, there is a family of Upādhyāya (Sarayû-pārin) Brāhmaṇas who proclaim themselves to be descendants of Gōswāmîjî's disciple Gaṇapati Upādhyāya. They own *Muāfî* (rent-free) land in Rājāpur and Nayāgāoṅ (Chitrakûṭa), traditionally known "to have been gifted by Emperor Akbar." There is, however, no written evidence to support this claim. "The copper-plate bearing Akbar's citation was carried by some members of the family to Nayāgāoṅ (Chitrakûṭa) in the wake of an internecine quarrel... Pandit Munnîlāl Upādhyāya, a member of the clan, who has in his possession the Ayōdhyākāṇḍa of the manuscript of the *Mānasa* written in the poet's own hand, has only some two or three timeworn documents with him."

All these confirm the popular tradition according to which Rājāpur is the birth-place of Tulasîdāsa.

(4) "There is yet another evidence from the *Rāmacharita-mānasa* itself which confirms the popular belief. In the *Ayōdhyākāṇḍa* the 'Tāpasa Prasaṅga' (the Episode of the Ascetic) is well-known. On leaving Prayāga, when Rāma crosses the Yamunā, the poet tells us that the riverside people abandon their work and rush to him at the news of his coming, and

"At what they were told they were all deeply pained;
'What the king and queen did was not right', they
complained." (*Atkins*)

The reactions and observations of the village-folk are cut short at this point and a fresh event is described. No sooner does an ascetic come into the picture than all his attention is suddenly focussed on him :

"His body was thrilled and eyes filled with tears,
As he recognised there his own God.

Down before him he fell like a log ; beyond telling
His state, as he lay on the God." (*Atkins*)

And then again commences the remorseful statement of the village-folk : "Oh, dear ! what sort of parents could they be, who commanded such delicate children to the forest."

An unknown ascetic appears in their midst. He does not, thereafter, take their leave and is, instead, absorbed in the blissful presence of the Lord. The fact that the poet leaves this episode as vague as that in the most mature canto of his work is not to be taken casually. This particular episode appears in all the versions of the *Mānasa* discovered so far and cannot, therefore, be dismissed as an interpolation. The most convincing explanation advanced by the commentators of the *Mānasa* is that the ascetic is none other than the poet himself. In his *Vinayapatrikā*, the poet claims to have known his Lord as a devotee during the past births : 'Tulasî tōsōṅ Rāma sōṅ kachhu naî na pahachāni'. (O Tulasî ! your acquaintance with Rāma is certainly not new.) It is obvious, therefore, that the poet believed that when Rāma visited his native place, he must have been amongst those who assembled to receive the Lord. Or what is more probable is that, fully absorbed in his composition, the poet mentally identified himself with the rural folk when his Lord visited his native region and thus enjoyed the heavenly bliss of meeting Rāma.

(5) "The poet does not get so intensely worked up during the whole journey of Rāma from Ayōdhyā as when he crosses the Yamunā. That is the area where Rājāpur is located, and it is his immense love of the land which inspires him to describe, with intense emotion and complete identification, the touching scenes amongst the village-folk at that particular point during Rāma's sojourns. Tulasîdāsa evinces the same emotional attachment for this particular part of the land as Kālidāsa does in his *Meghadûta* when he beseeches the cloud-messenger to go on its errand to Alakāpurî via Ujjayinî, although that amounted to an obvious detour."

"This proves that Rājāpur was his birth-place."

We shall now deal with these arguments one by one.

The first argument emanates from the statements of authors and commentators regarding the birth-place of Tulasîdāsa. These authors and commentators were not his contemporaries, and their statements would not, therefore, carry conviction unless backed by infallible evidences. Unfortunately, none of them has disclosed the source whence he drew his conclusions.

The second argument is obviously untenable because it bases itself on the statement of Sant Tulasî Sāhib who claimed to be an incarnation of the poet. Naturally, he must have made all efforts to gather as much detailed knowledge about Tulasîdāsa's life and activities as he could just to give his claim an air of credibility. This plea, therefore, deserves to be discarded outright.

The third argument bases itself on the documents relating to land-gift. The rent-free land is traditionally held by the Upādhyāya family, which is supposed to have descended from Tulasîdāsa. It would have been better if Pt. Rām Bahōrî Shukla had also published photographs of the deed held by him. The doubt would not, however, be cleared even then, because the deed could at best be taken to prove that Tulasîdāsa's descendants lived at Rājāpur—which does not necessarily mean that his place of birth was Rājāpur.

The fourth argument is also not conclusive. The poet could as well have received his Lord in the region where he practised penance, as at his native place. Not only that. The appearance of the poet in an ascetic garb points to the fact that it was actually the land where he was engaged in his spiritual practices—and the place of his spiritual activities does not necessarily mean that it was the place of his birth, too.

The fifth argument relates to the emotional attachment to and loving concern for the rural folk shown on the occasion when the exiled princes cross the Yamunā. It could be accounted for in this way. The exiled princes were accompanied by Sumantra in a chariot to a point beyond Shriṅgavērapura, and later by Niṣada and some *Brahmachārins*, commissioned by Bharadwāja, to Prayāga. Rāma bade goodbye to the *Brahmachārins* before he crossed the Yamunā at Prayāga and to the Niṣada-chief after having crossed it. It is, therefore, not sur-

prising that the poet could not find an occasion earlier for giving vent to the sympathies of the rural folk for the princely exiles. Treading barefoot through the forest and being just by themselves, they naturally evoked greater sympathy and affectionate concern at this stage.

Following Rām Bahōrî Shukla, Pt. Mahādēv Pāṇḍēya (in his *Tulasî-charita*) and Ayōdhyā Prasād Pāṇḍēya advanced some agruments in support of the Rājāpur theory which add nothing to the aforementioned points and, as such, carry no weight. No statement, unless backed by appropriate documents, can attain the status of evidence, and it is not difficult to rebut the arguments advanced by the two Pāṇḍēyas. Shrî Rām Narēsh Tripāṭhî, on the contrary, counteracts the claim of Rājāpur by the following arguments :

(1) One comes across a number of old people in Rājāpur, even to this day, who do not believe Rājāpur to be Tulasîdāsa's birth-place. Of course, he lived there for some time. But staying at a particular place for a certain period of time and being born there are two different things.

(2) According to a popular tradition, Tulasîdāsa crossed the Gaṅgā to reach his wife's place. There is no Gaṅgā in Rājāpur ; the river there is the Yamunā.

(3) One more argument deserves attention. How could Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa, who left the town in disgust, return to stay there.

The first contention seems to have an element of truth because the author of these lines also heard similar statements during his visit to the town. But traditions, by their very nature, develop and disappear in course of time, and one can hardly give them much credence in the face of more dependable evidences. The second part of the above statement is absolutely unfounded. It may be that Shrî Tripāṭhî heard this story in Sōrōṅ rather than at Rājāpur. The third one, of course, deserves to be considered, but only if we accept the contention that Tulasîdāsa returned to stay at Rājāpur, the town he had earlier left in disgust.

The plethora of evidences cited above could lead to the conclusion that Tulasîdāsa had some sort of a residence at

Rājāpur which was later handed over to the Upādhyāya family, as that was in the lineage of one of his disciples, and that there was some rent-free land attached to it. It cannot, however, be affirmed that the same was his birth-place. One thing, of course, deserves our consideration : it was less probable for an ardent devotee of Rāma like Tulasîdāsa to leave the picturesque surroundings of Chitrakûṭa, a place of scenic beauty and pilgrimage for the followers of the Rāma-cult, or even Sōrōṅ, the most coveted place for the Vaiṣṇavas, and choose Rājāpur for his spiritual practices. This fact finds a mention in the Gazetteer of the Bāṅdā district. We shall discuss the point presently.

Tulasîdāsa and Sōrōṅ

Pt. Rām Narēsh Tripāṭhî has recapitulated the arguments advanced in support of Sōrōṅ's claim to the honour of being Tulasî's birth-place. The arguments could be enumerated, *mutatis mutandis*, as follows :

(1) In his *Kavitāvalî*, *Gîtāvalî*, *Dōhāvalî*, and *Vinayapatrikā*, Tulasîdāsa uses such typical words and idioms as are commonly in vogue in Sōrōṅ but are rarely found in Rājāpur and Tārî regions to convey the same meanings.

(2) The oft-mentioned play of *Bhauṅrā* and *Chakadōrî* is quite common in Braja and its neighbouring areas. The urchins play it with stakes. This sport is certainly not common in Ayōdhyā, Banāras, and Rājāpur while it is very popular in Sōrōṅ. This leads us to believe that Tulasîdāsa was born at a place where this sport was quite popular with children.

(3) Tulasîdāsa used Braja and an admixture of Avadhî (and Braja) with equal felicity, which proves that his birth-place must have been on the boundary of the two linguistically connected regions.

(4) "Tulasî's vocabulary abounds in words current in Sōrōṅ and its western areas. There is no reason to believe that he incorporated them in Pûrvî Hindî (Avadhî). What is more probable is that they formed part of his household vocabulary and found their way into his compositions as a matter of course." "Sōrōṅ is the foremost place of pilgrimage for the inhabitants of Braja, Rājapûtanā, the

Punjāb, Kāṭhiāwāṛ, and Gujarāt. They go to Sōrōṅ for the immersion of the ashes of the deceased into the Gaṅgā. Every year a huge fair is organised in Sōrōṅ, and it is visited mainly by people from these regions. Naturally, therefore, the dialect used in Sōrōṅ abounds in words from these regions."

(5) "Tulasîdāsa has freely used words of Perso-Arabic origin in his verses, which itself is a proof of his habitat being in the western region. Sōrōṅ and its neighbouring areas have a number of muslim settlements. That is why words of Perso-Arabic origin are more common in western than in eastern Hindi."

(6) "The *Vārtā* describes Tulasîdāsa as Nandadāsa's elder brother and Nandadāsa as a *Sanauḍhiyā* (Brāhmaṇa) which is but a corrupt form of *Sanāḍhya*. It follows, therefore, that Tulasîdāsa was also a *Sanāḍhya* Brāhmaṇa. The *Vārtā* further describes Nandadāsa as belonging to a village named Rāmpur. This is a village near Sōrōṅ, and it was in this village that Nandadāsa's father was born. Obliged by circumstances, he shifted to Sōrōṅ and settled down in the Yōgamārga Mohallā of Sōrōṅ."

(7) "Tulasîdāsa was a *Sanāḍhya* Brāhmaṇa...If he were a *Kānyakubja* or a *Sarvariyā* Brāhmaṇa, he would not have hesitated to say so (in Kāshî), because the people of Kāshî are quite familiar with these sub-castes of Brāhmaṇas. But he was a *Sanāḍhya* : the *Sanāḍhyas* are not very common in the eastern regions even now and must have been rare in those days as well. Since *Sanāḍhyas* did not have, and they do not even now have, many scholars, the people of Kāshî would naturally have some difficulty in believing that they were Brāhmaṇas."

(8) "Biographers of Tulasîdāsa have variously affirmed Rājāpur (Bāṅdā), Tārî, Hājîpur (Chitrakûṭa) and Hastināpur to be his birth-place. But none has convincingly explained why and how he reached 'Sûkarkhēta' at a very young age. As he says :

> "I from my own master at Sûkarkhēta
> First heard of this story sublime;

But little did I understand, for a child
And unlettered was I at the time." (*Atkins*)

"Even if we believe that he was a wandering beggar, it is difficult to explain what special attraction took him to 'Sûkarkhēta'. People of Rājāpur and Tārî may not have even heard the name."

(9) "Tulasîdāsa in his *Vinayapatrikā* drops hints not only about his family (He gave you birth in a good family and a comely body—*V.P.*, 135) but also about his birth-place when he says :

'This is India, nearby the gods' river, the land is good,
the company lofty.' (135)

"The passage refers to a lovely place near the Gaṅgā naturally as his birth-place."

Let us take these arguments one by one :

The examples cited in the first argument are all drawn from *Vinayapatrikā* and the language of this work is 'Braja Bhāṣa'. It is not surprising, therefore, that their use is limited to the Braja region, and that they are not current in the regions of Avadhî. The argument, therefore, does not have adequate basis.

The second argument is equally untenable. That a particular sport is not common in Rājāpur does not appear to be a forceful argument at all. The champions of the other theory argue it just the other way round. Besides, even if it is not popular today, it does not necessarily follow that the position, as it obtained then, was the same.

As far as the third argument goes, it passes one's comprehension how the fact of having composed verses in two languages could be construed as a 'firm evidence' of the poet's birth-place being somewhere on the boundary of two linguistic regions. Numerous examples of this type may be cited, especially when one of the two languages had attained the status of a standard literary medium.

The fourth argument cites two usages from *Vinayapatrikā* and avers that they are not current in Rājāpur. They are obviously Braja Bhāṣa usages, and what has been said above

in respect of the first argument may very well be repeated in this context as well. In the case of some of the rare usages by the poet, it is impossible to affirm whether their present boundaries existed as such at all times in the past. Besides, a freakish usage of two cannot be taken as infallible pointers to the poet's birth-place.

The scholar himself proposes a refutation of the fifth argument enumerated above in the following words : "Or else Tulasîdāsa knew the official language of his times!" This considerably dilutes the force of the argument. Further, conclusive counter-arguments may be advanced in this behalf: for, otherwise, one should come across less of Perso-Arabic words in Nandadāsa and Tulasîdāsa—who belonged to the east according to the author's own arguments—than in Sûradāsa, who lived so near the capital of the Moghul Emperor. Moreover, if one of the brothers, viz., Tulasîdāsa, went eastward and stayed there all his life and the other, Nandadāsa, shifted to stay at Mathurā-Vrindāvana, the Nandadāsa's compositions should have a larger percentage of words of Perso-Arabic origin as compared with Tulasîdāsa's, if the author's logic is valid. But none who knows the facts would risk such a statement.

The sixth point made by the author has the *Vārtā* as its source. One of the versions of the said work contains neither a reference to Nandadāsa's being a 'Sanauḍhiā' nor to his belonging to Rāmpur. It is a basic principle of textual criticism that, what is not common to all available versions of a work is generally an interpolation. The contention, therefore, is doubtful. The quotations cited elsewhere by the author do not mention the version which forms his basis. The quotation mentions that Nandadāsa was a 'Sanauḍhiā Brāhmaṇa', but it is nowhere mentioned that he was a native of Rāmpur.

The seventh point is equally baseless. The mere fact that Tulasîdāsa does not react to the various reflections on his caste does not logically lead to the conclusion that he was not a *Kānyakubja* or a *Sarayûpārin*. And even if it is proved that he was a 'Sanāḍhya', how does it automatically follow that he could not have been born in Rājāpur ?

The eighth point poses the hitherto unexplained problem of Tulasîdāsa's appearance at Sûkarkhēta, while he was yet

'very young' and did not know 'what is what'! It has been contended in reply that 'Sûkarkhēta'—now known as Paskā—existed near Ayōdhyā on the confluence of the Ghāgharā and the Sarayû. The opponents of this view, however, assert that while Sōrōṅ is an ancient and important place of pilgrimage, one cannot vouch for the 'ancientness' of Paskā. It is beyond doubt that the old name of Sōrōṅ was 'Saukarav', and not 'Sûkarkhēta'. No one has so far proved that Sōrōṅ was known as Sûkarkhēta even during the time of Tulasîdāsa, if not earlier. All evidences in this regard belong to the time after the composition of *Mānasa*. We can, of course, safely draw one inference. In his young age, deprived of the care of his parents and wandering as an utterly desolate child, Tulasîdāsa did come into contact with saints who were devotees of Rāma and their teachings led him on to the path of devotion to the Deity. If, therefore, the 'Sûkarkhēta' alluded to is in fact Sōrōṅ, it is not improbable that the group of saints who inspired our poet on to the path of devotion to Rāma had undertaken a trip to Sûkarkhēta or to any other place of pilgrimage like Mathurā or Vrindāvan, wherefrom they might have paid a visit to Sûkarkhēta.

The last argument is based on two assumptions, but they too do not rest on any firm ground. It cannot be presumed that statements regarding one's family antecedents were necessarily made in childhood, nor can we accept the proposition that one cannot allude to any place other than one's birth-place while making such a statement. The whole passage alluded to contains nothing that might rule out the possibility of its composition in Kāshî.

The other points, too, do not likewise prove the claim of Sōrōṅ.

A mention may also be made here of the past traditions of Rājāpur—traditions that were in vogue at least a century ago. The birth-place of Tulasîdāsa was not a bone of contention then, and we may safely presume that the traditions had come down intact at that time. A reference to these traditions is found in the Gazetteer of Bāṅdā. We have two editions of the Gazetteer—the one published in Vikramî Samvat 1931 (roughly in 1874 A.D.) and the other in 1966 Vikramî (1909

A.D.). While narrating the history of the origin of Rājāpur, some local traditions related to it are also mentioned. The 1966 Vik. edition contains some additions to the text of the earlier (1931 Vik.) version. The later additions are quoted below in brackets along with the original account :

"During the reign of Akbar, it is said, a saint named Tulasîdāsa—who belonged to Sōrōṅ in Kāsganj Tehsîl of District Etāh—came to the forest on the bank of the river Jamunā where we now have the town of Rājāpur. There he engaged himself in meditation and other spiritual practices. Impressed by the purity of his conduct, many people became his followers and gathered around him. It is the same Tulasîdāsa who composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* and whose house is even now shown in the town. This was originally a *kuchā* building, recently reconstructed, and now it houses a memorial and a slightly mutilated copy of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. There is some rent-free land attached to the memorial but the present holders of the land are uneducated and quarrelsome by nature and do not care to follow the ideals of religious purity and magnanimity which the revered poet cherished so dearly. In the memorial is also installed a stone image said to be that of the poet and believed to have a divine origin. It is said to have been recovered from under the sandy tract near Rājāpur. According to the local tradition, Tulasîdāsa came to know of Rājāpur because of his marriage in a Brāhmaṇa family of the village Mahēwā which is situated in the Sirāthû Tehsîl of Allāhābād District. There are some peculiar conventions in Rājāpur that are said to have their origin in the teachings of Tulasîdāsa : none, for example, would build a *puccā* brick or stone house, even the richest persons dwell in *kuchā* houses. Only the temples are constructed with bricks. No barber resides in that town, no dancing girls except the 'Bēṛnîs' could live there. There are restrictions on potters as well; pitchers and other earthenware are brought from outside. These restrictions, however, are no longer followed meticulously, they are now in operation only around Tulasîdāsa's house."

This account of the gazetteer has found its rejoinder in the writings of Shrî Ayōdhyā Prasād Pāṇḍēya who advances counter-arguments. Traditions, sometimes, have their origin in inadequate evidences, and they cannot be maintained in the

face of hard irrefutable facts.

Even if, then, we accept the proposition that Tulasîdāsa visited Sûkarkhēta—which, according to the champions of the Sōrōṅ-school, is none other than Sōrōṅ—it does not prove his close affiliations with that town.

Caste and sub-caste

There is little doubt that Tulasîdāsa was a Brāhmaṇa by caste. We have no evidence whatever to counteract that assumption. In fact, the internal evidence as it obtains in *Kavitāvalî* is a pointer to that fact.[1]

The problem, therefore, is not of the poet's caste but of his sub-caste. We shall consider three statements embodying three different views in this behalf.

Sir George Grierson, following Pt. Sudhākar Dwivēdî, had held that "Tulasîdāsa was a Sarayûpārin, and not a Kānyakubja Brāhmaṇa because to the Kānyakubjas the act of accepting alms or to go a begging is abhorrent, whereas the poet, speaking of his family, has himself admitted 'jāyō kula mangana' (born in the family of beggars)."[2] Further, this statement is confirmed by a traditional saying :

> "Tulasî parāshar gōta dubē patiaujā kē", i.e.,
> Tulasîdāsa's gōtra was 'Pārāshar' and he was a 'Dubē' of 'Patyaujā'.

The proponents of this case have here made two assumptions. Firstly, that the Kānyakubjas abhor taking alms and, secondly, that the word 'mangan' in the verse 'jāyō kula mangana' etc. connotes a Brāhmaṇa. The first statement seems to be partially correct and has been corroborated by Sherring. The second one is difficult to agree with, because the literal meaning of the word 'mangana' i.e., beggar, seems to be more appropriate in this context. Some people have controverted this point by the argument that the 'Dubēs' of 'Patyaujā' are 'Kānyakubjas'. Such oral traditions, however, need not be given undue importance.

1. Brāhmaṇa jyōṅ ugilyō urgāri hauṅ tyoṅ hî tihārē hiyē na hitaihauṅ (7.102).
2. *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented at Banāras*, p. 29.

Shrî Bhagîratha Prasād Dîkshit draws our attention to another important line from *Vinayapatrikā* :

> "Kauna dhōṅ Sōmajāgî Ajāmila adhama kauna gajarāja dhōṅ bājapēyî."

i.e. What sōma sacrifice did base Ajāmila perform ? and when did the elephant-king perform the Vājapēya sacrifice ? And it is said that the poet has unwittingly given a proof of his being a Kānyakubja by comparing the elephant with 'Vājpēyî' for Vājpēyîs are Kānyakubjas, not Sarayûpārins or Sanāḍhyas. But actually the word seems to have been used here not to denote a subcaste but as a counterpart of 'sōmayājî'. Such usages are found elsewhere too in *Patrikā*.

In another context, again, he compares the elephant with 'Dîkshita' (*Vinaya*, 240), but the commentators have not taken it to denote a subcaste but 'one who drinks Sōmarasa in a sacrifice.'

The champions of the claim of Sōrōṅ as Tulasî's birthplace maintain that the poet was a 'Sanāḍhya' Brāhmaṇa—'Shukla' by *gōtra*. They quote, besides other material, the *Vārtā* of Nandadāsa and the following line of *Vinayapatrikā* in their support.

> 'Diyō sukula janama sarîra sundara hētu jō phala chāri kō'.
> i.e. "He gave you birth in a good family and a comely body, the means to the four fruits (of life)."
>
> (*Vinaya*, 135)

They also maintain, as stated earlier, that he would not hesitate to disclose his family affiliations in Kāshî, had he not been a 'Sanāḍhya'.

While other points made here have already been referred to and rejected earlier, as far as the third point (viz., 'sukula'... etc.) goes, it would be enough to say that the word 'Sukula' here means just 'a noble family' which fits more appropriately in the present context. This may very well be compared with another identical statement from *Kavitāvalî* :

> 'bhali Bhāratabhûmi bhalē kula janma samāja sarîra bhalō lahike.'

(Born in the good land of Bharata in a good family,
blessed with a comely body and a good society.) 7.33

The 'Mishrabandhus', after an investigation in and around Rājāpur, have affirmed that the place is inhabited by Kānyakubja Dwivēdî Brāhmaṇas, and not by Sarayûpārin Brāhmaṇas, and if Tulasîdāsa was a Dwivēdî, it is more likely that he was a Kānyakubja and not a Sarayûpārin. Secondly, the poet was married in a 'Pāṭhaka' family which among the 'Sarayûpārins' is considered to be superior and, amongst the 'Kānyakubjas', to be inferior to 'Dwivēdies'. It is, therefore, more probable that he was a 'Kānyakubja', although the tradition in Rājāpur declares him to be 'Sarayûpārin'. This view rests on two grounds : the first relates to the population of 'Kānyakubja Dwivēdies' in and around Rājāpur and the second to matrimonial customs prevailing amongst the Dwivēdies and Pāṭhakas. The first may be true in a limited sense—that is, in the context of the present times, but maybe the area was earlier inhabited by some Sarayûpārin Dwivēdî families also. It is evident from the map of Brāhmaṇa habitats in U.P., as given in the census report for the year 1948 Vik. (1891 A.D.), that in that year Rājāpur was, by and large, situated in the region of the Sarayûpārin Brāhmaṇas on the boundary line between the Kānyakubja and the Sarayûpārin areas. The second argument is unfounded in as much as the editors of 'Tulasî Granthāvalî', one of whom is a 'Sarayûpārin Brāhmaṇa himself, do not accept as valid the statement that the Pāṭhakas are held superior to the Dwivēdies.

The position in respect of Tulasîdāsa's sub-caste is, therefore, much the same as in the case of his birth-place, and it would not be appropriate to risk a final verdict on the basis of the available data.

The poet's birth and the beginning of his struggle

There are two passages in *Kavitāvālî* (7.57 and 7.73) and three in *Vinayapatrikā* (227, 272 and 275) which throw some light on these topics.

In the first of the passages of *Kavitāvalî* referred to above, the poet, making a mention of his birth in a poverty-stricken family, says that his "parents had a sense of remorse and guilt

on seeing the ceremonial festivities of his birth." Some scholars take it to mean that Tulasîdāsa was an illegitimate child. This seems rather far-fetched, for if the conception of the child was not a sin for the mother, how could mere 'listening to the songs be a sin'? What seems to be the reality is that the relatives who bring presents on the occasion of the birth of a male child have to be more than compensated for by payments in cash or kind. No festivities are, however, organised if a child is born in the 'mûla nakshatra' (esp. 'abhukta'), i.e., under a particular ominous planet, unless, of course, proper remedial measures are taken. It is a common belief that the birth of such a child causes calamity for the father or the mother or at least leads to financial ruin of the father. Thus, one of the probabilities may be his birth under such a planet. The other probability may be the financial stringency of the parents who had no resources to compensate the relatives for their presents, relatives who do appear on such occasions, whatever be the plight of the parents!

In the second passage of *Kavitāvalî* and the first of *Patrikā* referred to above, the poet says "my parents abandoned me after giving birth, and I was condemned to misfortune by the Creator." Similarly, in the second passage of *Patrikā*, he says: "After giving birth to my physical being, my parents left me like a wretched insect." Does it mean that he was abandoned in very early childhood? It has been said that this was done because of his birth in the 'abhukta mûla', but this does not seem convincing because there are some duly-prescribed remedial measures to counteract that. Poverty also does not seem to be enough reason for such a drastic measure for even the poorest would not resort to such a step.

The 'Kuṭil kîṭ' in *Vinayapatrikā* (in the quotation above) is taken by some scholars from Sōrōṅ as an allusion to a typical insect 'Kuṭîla' which dies after giving birth to its young one. The poet's parents are also said to have suffered the same fate after his birth. But the doubt raised here is that in all probability it's only the female that might die whereas the poet makes a pointed reference to the death of both the parents. What it really seems to mean is that the insect, by its very (perverse, i.e., 'Kuṭila') nature, does not rear its offspring—and

that his parents too behaved likewise.

Born in a poverty-stricken family and deprived by ill-luck of the care of his parents, the poet did not perhaps have any means of livelihood except begging. There are numerous references in his works to his helpless plight and the utter callousness with which he was treated by most people. "Treated with utter disdain, I rambled about in search of pieces of bread thrown to feed dogs." In another passage in *Patrikā* the poet says, "Finding me miserable, the saints said unto me : 'Bother no further. Rāma did not reject any of the creatures who were as low as thou. Whoever submits to Rāma's care is looked after and helped till he attains freedom from his afflictions.' And, as soon as Tulasî sought your patronage, he attained happiness though he lacked firm devotion unto you and a complete sense of dependence on your Grace." This shows that the poet developed a sense of devotion to Rāma from his early childhood through his contact with the saints. A touch of exaggeration cannot be completely ruled out in the foregoing confession but there is no doubt that a completely helpless and orphaned Tulasîdāsa was brought, by the irony of circumstances, into the ranks of saints whose impact radically changed the course of his life.

Tulasî's spiritual preceptor (guru)

There are very few hints in Tulasîdāsa's own texts regarding his spiritual preceptor. We come across some indirect references in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*—(*vide* Dōhā 1, and Chaupāî 30) and *Vinayapatrikā* (verse no. 173) which point to the following facts :

(1) Tulasî's preceptor was a well-versed and well-informed man of religious disposition;
(2) the poet had heard the story of Rāma from him more than once;
(3) when he heard it for the first time, he was too young to understand its import;
(4) it was at Sûkarkhēta that he heard it for the first time;
(5) the same 'guru' inspired him to devote himself to Rāma.

The expression 'nara-rûpa-Hari' in one of his couplets is often taken to suggest the name 'Narahari' or 'Narahari Dāsa'.

Two of the above inferences are controversial viz., the references to 'Sûkarkhēta and 'Narahari', and call for a detailed discussion.

'Sûkarkhēta', 'Sûkarakshētra' or 'Vārāhakshētra' or 'Vārāha-Tîrtha' may allude to more than one place, especially to the following :

(1) We have seen above that an ancient town 'Saukarav', now Sōroṅ, is also known as 'Sûkarakshētra'.

(2) The Skandapurāṇa refers to a 'Vārāha Tîrtha' on the southern bank of the Narmadā and describes its importance for the devout. It was here that God, incarnated as 'Vārāha', salvaged the earth from the demon Hiraṇyāksha.

(3) We find another version of almost the same episode in the Brahmapurāṇa where the locale is the Gautamî (Gōdāvarî) or the Southern Ganges. Here it was the demon Sindhusēna whom the Lord fought and vanquished.

(4) According to Sir George Cunningham, who conducted an archaeological survey of India, the real 'Vārāhakshētra' is situated seven miles north-northwest of Bastî. Even now we have a 'Vārāha temple' here. This is the place known as 'Kali' among the Buddhists. Another name for the same place is 'Vyāghrapur' where, according to the Purāṇas, Lord Vārāha was incarnated. This then is the real 'Vārāhakshētra'.

(5) Another 'Sûkarakshētra', known to almost all the biographers and commentators of Tulasîdāsa, has its location near the confluence of the Sarayû and the Ghāgharā. It is situated in district Gōṇḍa, about 12 miles south of Kamālganj railway station and thirty miles northwest of Ayōdhyā—just about a furlong from Paskā where one finds a Vārāha temple. About a mile and a half from 'Sûkarakshētra' is the place known as 'Mailā Kōṭā'. Tradition has it that the demon Hiraṇyāksha concealed the earth under

the 'cover of excreta' (mala kōṭa) which obliged the Lord to appear in the form of a Vārāha or Boar.

A thorough probe into the Purāṇas and investigations into the regional geographical accounts may lead to the discovery of many more 'Sûkarakshētras' in the country.

As far as the question of his 'guru' is concerned, Grierson furnishes two lists of his upward spiritual lineage. The lists show Naraharidāsa to be his 'guru' and Tulasîdāsa to be the eighth in the downward spiritual lineage from Rāmānanda : (1) Rāmānanda, (2) Sursurānanda, (3) Mādhavānanda, (4) Garîb-dāsa, (5) Lakshmîdāsa, (6) Gōpāladāsa, (7) Naraharidāsa, and (8) Tulasîdāsa.

Talking of the authenticity of the two lists furnished by him, Grierson has admitted that one is based on oral tradition whereas the source of the other is unknown. Nābhādāsa's *Bhaktamāla* is an important source of authentication of these lists submitted by Grierson, since Nābhādāsa himself belongs to the spiritual lineage of Rāmānanda. Nābhādāsa mentions Surasurānanda as Rāmānanda's disciple but makes no mention whether the other saints given in the list also belonged to that spiritual lineage. This raises doubts about the authenticity of Grierson's list.

As far as the name of Tulasî's spiritual preceptor is concerned, quite a few of them with the same name flourished during the time of Tulasîdāsa and prior to that. Nābhādāsa alone mentions six 'Naraharis', three of whom according to Nābhādāsa's testimony, belonged to Rāmānanda's spiritual descendants.

Thus, neither the name 'Narahari' (Narsingh) provides any useful clue and enables us to make a genuine investigation about Tulasîdāsa's preceptor nor does the mention of 'Sûkar-khēta' take us anywhere nearer the solution of the problem of his native land.

Wilson has mentioned the name of Tulasîdāsa's preceptor as Jagannāthadāsa who, like Nābhādāsa, was a disciple of Agradāsa. But Nābhādāsa flourished much later than Tulasîdāsa as is evident from the fact that his *Bhaktamāla* is ascribed to 1715 Vik. (1658 A.D.). This makes the claim ridiculous.

According to the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* the poet's spiritual master was one Rāghavānanda of Banāras who admitted him to the Rāmānanda cult. But we find no other evidence supporting this statement.

Married life and renunciation

Tulasîdāsa had, in all probability, led a married life, for if this were not so, there could have been no occasion for him to say in his *Dōhāvalî* that his wife beseeched him to take her along with him.[1]

Nor would such statements have occurred in *Vinayapatrikā* in which he refers to his indulgence in youthful enjoyments (*V.P.* 183). The reference to his initiation into the ways of the world in *Bāhuka* also seems to support these statements.[2]

It is a common belief that Tulasîdāsa was much too attached to his wife before he renounced the world, and the credit for directing him to the path of devotion to Rāma goes to her. This episode, however, finds no mention either in the poet's own texts or in any other contemporaneous writing. The oral tradition in this regard has, however, been very widely and uniformly accepted. Priyādāsa, in his commentary on the 'Chhappaya' referring to Tulasîdāsa, starts with this very episode.

After he had renounced the world, the poet had naturally to choose between a life of penance in solitude and a life devoted to social service. That the poet chose the middle course is implied in the following lines from *Dōhāvalî* :

> "Tulasî has built a small township of devotion to Rāma between his home and the forest." (*Dōhāvalî* 256)

Original name

The poet has himself said in *Kavitāvalî* that his original name was Tulasî and that he had suffixed 'dasa' to it. "My name was Tulasî but because of a wretched lot 'dasa' was appended to it" (7.13). In all probability, therefore, the original

1. *Dōhā*, 255.
2. "I fell into the ways of the world and out of sheer ignorance and illusion broke in a huff the sacred bonds of devotion to Rāma."

name Tulasî—or some other name related to it—was changed to Tulasîdāsa at the time of initiation.

In another context he mentions his name to be 'Rāmabōlā' which was given to him by his master, Lord Rāma :

"My name is Rāmabōlā and I am a slave to King Rāma."
(*V*., 7.100)

It is obvious that Rāmabōlā was his spiritual name as is usual with Vaiṣṇava devotees, and it shows that repeating the name of Rāma was the main activity of the poet's spiritual life.

In Chitrakûṭa and Kāshî

Some 'dōhās' (2.6.1, 2.6.3 & 7.4.7) in *Rāmāgyāprashna* (1621 Vik. era) indicate that after renunciation, Tulasîdāsa had stayed at Chitrakûṭa for a minimum period of six months.

It is said that while at Chitrakûṭa, he had an occasion to see his Lord in person (cf. *Vinayapatrikā*, 264) :

"O Tulasî, what the merciful king of Kōshala had done to you,
Be mindful of that incident at Chitrakûṭa and make up !"
(*V.P.*, 264)

It is, however, not very clear whether the statement implies a claim to have seen the Lord in person.

The poet was in deep love with Chitrakûṭa, and he has expressed this love for the place in more than one context. His numerous references lead to the belief that he had paid more than one visit to the place.

It is also probable that he had reached Kāshî some time before 1631 Vik. (1574 A.D.), when he addressed a gentleman Gaṅgā Rām, supposed to have been a resident of Prahlād Ghāṭ in Kāshî, in dōhā 1.7.7 of *Rāmāgyāprashna*. He, thereafter, seems to have made Kāshî the venue of his spiritual practices, for he makes mention of the town in his *Mānasa*, *Patrikā*, *Dōhāvalî*, *Kavitāvalî* and *Bāhuka* repeatedly. He used to visit other holy places as well. He had, for example, lived at Ayōdhyā for some time—probably at a place known as 'Tulasî Chaurā'. He had visited Prayāga, Sîtābaṭ and, perhaps, also Badarikāshrama. Even so, he had never left 'Kāshî' for any considerable length of time till his death, and, according to the

popular belief it was in 'Kāshî' at the 'Asîghāṭa' that he breathed his last.

Friends and well-wishers

Nawāb Abdur Rehmān Khānkhāna is said to have been Tulasî's friend, which is not improbable. Khānkhāna was the administrator of Banāras from 1646 to 1648 Vik., and it is quite likely that this well-known patron of Hindi poetry tried to befriend the best-known Hindi poet while he stayed in that town. It is said that Mānasingh and some other rulers also used to pay visits to the poet, who appears to confirm this :

> "At one time Tulasî abegging from door to door
> At another mighty Kings to him in reverence bowed ;
> (It made all the difference !) That was Tulasî without the
> grace of Rāma,
> This is now Tulasî blessed with His grace profound."
>
> (*Dōhā*, 109)

We have mentioned above a certain Gaṅgā Rām whom the poet addresses in his *Rāmāgyāprashna.* For a long time, Gaṅgā Rām's descendants preserved a manuscript, dated 1665 Vik. (i.e. 1598 A.D.) of the work which was supposed to have been written by the poet himself. And, even now, they claim to possess his portrait. Another significant friend of the poet was Tōdar, a landlord of Kāshî, whose descendants observe the poet's death anniversary even today and give away alms to Brāhmaṇas on that occasion.

Honours

Tulasîdāsa must have gained a wide reputation after the composition of the *Rāmacharitamānasa.* He himself makes a mention of this. He was regarded as an incarnation of Vālmîki even during his life-time.

> "By the miracle of the name of Rāma,
> Tulasî attained the status of a Great Sage." (*Kavitā*, 7.72)

Nābhādāsa mentions the poet with deference :

> "To cross the vast ocean of the world,
> A simple and handy ferry he wrought,

To cause salvation of the base beings of Kali,
Vālmîki in the physical frame of Tulasî was brought."

Poets and saints of later generations also seem to echo this belief and express the same sense of reverence to the poet. Mōrōpant, a devout poet of Mahārāṣṭra, may be cited as an example.

Opposition

There is no doubt that voices of opposition against our poet were also fairly loud. In his *Dōhāvalî* (144, 145, 146, 387, 388, 494 and 545), there are numerous passages that unequivocally bear testimony to this fact. Such references are also traceable in *Kavitāvalî* (7.108).

It is, however, difficult to define the precise period of such opposition. It must have started along with his popularity and gained strength as he grew in stature. It may also be imagined that he shot into eminence after the composition of the *Mānasa* because his earlier works—and the later ones as well—did not enjoy the same popularity.

Another ground of opposition against Tulasîdāsa was possibly his caste. To all his opponents, the poet gave a forthright and befitting reply in his *Kavitāvalî* :

"Dhûta kahau avadhûta kahau rajpûta kahau jolāhā
kahau kōû,
Kāhû kî bēṭî sōṅ bēṭā na byāhabā kāhû kî jāti bigāra
na sōû" (7.106)

"Call me crooked or a sham mendicant,
Call me 'rājpût' or else a 'weaver';
I have not to get my son married to anybody's daughter
Nor do I propose to get anyone's caste defiled and
downgraded."

In *Vinayapatrikā*, too (76), he dismisses the remarks of his critics in a similar vein, treating them with the contempt they deserved.

Another kind of opposition that he had to encounter was from the worshippers of Shiva—the priests of the Shaivite temples—in Kāshî. He makes oblique references to this fact

in his *Kavitāvalî and Vinayapatrikā* (8) while offering his prayers to the great God. The opposition from this particular quarter can be accounted for if we recollect that Tulasîdāsa's growing eminence must have led many a worshipper of Lord Shiva to change his loyalty.

And lastly, in view of what he says in *Kavitāvalî* and *Vinayapatrikā*, it seems quite possible that a brutal attempt was made on his life as well :

> "How can the enmity of others touch that man to whom compassionate Raghupati shows mercy,
> Though they try ten million ways, yet they cannot bend one hair upon a devotee's head.
> That low man who conceives the death of a holy man : he himself dies that death, the brute,
> ...Tulasîdāsa, he need fear none who has the might of Raghuvîr's arm for his protection."
>
> (*Vinay*., 137)

Physical suffering

In some of the verses of his *Dōhāvalî*, *Kavitāvalî* and *Vinayapatrikā*, the poet prays for relief from some acute pain. He does not make a specific mention of this ailment, but in his *Bāhuka* (20-34) he does speak of a severe pain in his arm. He also says that he had been suffering from this ailment for quite some time (*ibid*, 28, 30) and attributes it to rheumatism. Elsewhere he attributes it to the evil influence and demonic activities of the 'Kaliyuga'. Ultimately, as the poet himself affirms in *Bāhuka* (39), this pain subsided by the grace of Rāma.

The last phase

The verses of *Kavitāvalî* and *Bāhuka* throw adequate light on the last phase of Tulasîdāsa's life. Some events mentioned in the two works may be linked up with exact dates. A copy of *Kavitāvalî* and *Bāhuka* believed to have been written in Vik. Sam. 1870, i.e. in 1813 A.D., throws enough light on the dates of some contemporary events. It contains verses that were composed during the period when the 'arm-ailment' continued. A number of verses that occur in the printed version are not to be found here. References to some other occurrences—such as

a devastating epidemic and ruinous indigence, the entry of Saturn into Zodiacal Pisces, plunderage in Kāshî, mischief wrought by 'Kali', the sight of the auspicious bird (cf. *Kavitavālî*), pain in other parts of the body following the ailment of the arm, and boils on limbs—do not appear in this version. The only occurrence to which a definite date can be ascribed is the 'entry of Saturn into Zodiacal Pisces'. The dates of all other occurrences can only provisionally be fixed on the basis of uncertain calculations.

Entry of Saturn into Zodiacal Pisces and Kali's mischief

While the poet has made a mention of the havoc wrought by 'Kali' elsewhere, it is also described in the verses of *Kavitāvalî* that do not appear in the aforementioned manuscript of 1870 Vik. (1813 A.D.). The passage describing the effect of 'Saturn's entry into Pisces' is likewise not found in the above copy of this work. The passage emphasises the havoc caused by the redoubtable 'Kali', which is a pointer to the fact that the so-called mischief of 'Kali' got a spurt during this ominous period.

The question that naturally poses itself relates to the period of this entry of Saturn into Zodiacal Pisces. Pt. Sudhākar Dwivedî's calculations fix the span of two such intervals as extending from Chaitra Shukla 5, 1640 Vik., or thereabout, to Jyēṣṭha, 1642 Vik., as also from Chaitra Shukla 2, 1669 Vik., to Jyēṣṭha, 1671 Vik. The second spell seems to be the likely period referred to by Tulasîdāsa since it falls at the fag-end of the poet's life.

Devastating epidemic and utter indigence

In some passages of *Kavitāvalî*, the poet makes a reference to a devastating epidemic and a spell of utter indigence that swept across Kāshî and caused havoc all around (*Kavi.*, 7.176). Although he has not specifically mentioned whether this epidemic was cholera or plague, it is more likely that it was plague, the terrible epidemic that struck Benāras sometime between 1673 and 1681 Vik. Sam. (1624 A.D.). This also happens to be the last phase of the poet's life, 1680 Vik. (1623 A.D.) being the year of his demise. Some scholars think that our poet was

also attacked by the disease, but the poet himself says (*Kavi.*, 7.183) that the epidemic was suppressed at some places by Hanumān and was completely eliminated by Lord Rāma.

The end

The poet, at some stage, also suffered from boils caused by his attempt to uproot his hair, boils from which blood and pus oozed on. He prayed to his Master Rāma, to Shiva, and to Hanumān for relief, but it seems that the malady did not subside, as he makes no mention of his recovery from the disease. It is not improbable that this ultimately resulted in the poet's death.

We have no contemporaneous evidence regarding the poet's death. According to popular tradition, however, the end came in 1680 Vik. (1623 A.D.) on the seventh day of the second fortnight, in the month of Shrāvaṇa, at Asîghāṭa in Kashî. The author of *Mûla Gōsāîṅcharita*, while mentioning the same year (1680 Vik.), differs in respect of the date which he describes as 'Sāvana Shyāmā tîja shani' i.e., Saturday, falling on the third day of the first fortnight in the month of Shrāvaṇa. By calculation, the day and the date do not tally. But the descendants of Tulasîdāsa's friend Tōdar observe his death anniversary on this very date. It is, therefore, likely that the date of death may be correct while the day mentioned viz., Saturday might have been a result of miscalculation on the part of Bēnîmādhavadāsa. We would, therefore, accept the date of death, viz., 'Shrāvaṇa—the third day in the first half of Shrāvaṇa given by him as correct, but not the day.

The title 'Gōsāîṅ'

It would be relevant to discuss the origin of the title 'Gōsāîṅ' so inseparably prefixed to Tulasîdāsa's name. It is generally believed that the title was conferred upon him in recognition of his being an ascetic and a pious soul, but that, at some stage, he became the 'head of a maṭha' (monastery)—a 'Gōsāîṅ'—is unmistakably clear from some passages of *Bāhuka* wherein he expresses a sense of remorse on accepting this position (*Bāhuka*, 40). These expressions of remorse, it seems, have also something to do with the boils from which he suffered.

during the last phase of his life (*Bāhuka*, 41).

The author of these lines successfully laboured to trace the 'maṭha', which was once upon a time headed by Tulasîdāsa. It was situated at the 'Lōlārka Kuṇḍa' in Kāshî, and we have evidence to show that this monastery did exist till the year 1717 Vik. (1660 A.D.) when a scholar named Jaya Krishṇa Dāsa prepared a copy of the *Nyāya Siddhānta Manjarî* here. In all likelihood this 'maṭha' was at one time headed by Tulasîdāsa.

Conclusion

The foregoing investigations establish that Tulasîdāsa was in all probability born in the year 1589 Vik. Sam., i.e., in 1532 A.D. It is difficult to say for certain what his birth-place was but on the strength of available evidence, one tends to believe that it was Rājāpur (Distt. Bāṅdā) or some place thereabout. It is proved beyond doubt that for a fairly long time he had a close association with Rājāpur. He was born in a Brāhmaṇā family, but it cannot again be said with any degree of certainty as to what sub-caste of the Brāhmaṇas he belonged to. His parents were utterly indigent.

Tulasîdāsa suffered separation from his parents at a very early age. Other relatives also appear to have steered clear of their responsibility. The poet had, therefore, to go abegging for subsistence. It was perhaps at this stage of utter helplessness that he came into contact with some saints who advised him to submit himself to the never-failing care of Rāma. This marked a turn in his career and led him on to the path of devotion to Rāma. He got himself associated with a Hanumān Temple and filled his belly with whatever was given him from out of the offerings to the deity. He recalled this phase of his life gratefully time and again in his writings.

Not much is known about Tulasîdāsa's preceptor. We only know that he was a devotee of Rāma and used to recite His story to devout listeners. When Tulasîdāsa came into contact with his *guru*, he was not mentally equipped to comprehend the subtleties of the narrative. He listened to the story from his *guru* in Sûkarkhēta. It is not possible again to locate this venue with certitude since there are quite a few places designated as 'Sûkarkhēta. Tulasîdāsa's *guru* was a well-

versed scholar and a well-informed man who directed Tulasîdāsa on to the path of devotion to Rāma. His teachings left an indelible imprint on child Tulasîdāsa and his devotion to the Lord grew deeper as time passed on.

On attaining youth, the poet appears to have married, but possibly his inner self somehow revolted against this life, and he soon bade goodbye to it for ever. He then lived in Chitrakûṭa for sometime—and this was before 1621 Vik., i.e. 1564 A.D. Thereafter, he migrated to Kāshî—this also presumably happened before 1564 A.D. Although he paid occasional visits to several places of pilgrimage associated with Rāma, his permanent residence was in Kāshî. He commenced the composition of the *Mānasa* in Ayōdhyā, but came back to Kāshî.

Tulasîdāsa's reputation got an unprecedented spurt after the composition of the *Mānasa* and gradually he came to be known as an incarnation of Vālmîki. This gave rise to a sense of jealousy and hostility against him in certain quarters. They cast all kinds of aspersions on his parentage, his caste, his asceticism, and ultimately attacked his person. All this, however, left Tulasîdāsa unmoved.

In Kāshî, Tulasîdāsa became the head of a monastery in Lōlārka Kuṇḍa and was designated as 'Gōsāîṅ'. His life thereafter was comfortable. As his age advanced, he suffered from rheumatic trouble and was also a victim to other ailments. About 1669 Vik. (1612 A.D.) he suffered from acute arm-pain, which spread to other parts of the body and caused him acute agony, but later on it subsided. Almost at this very time, the town, hit by a disastrous epidemic, fell into the grip of utter indigence. There were other kinds of disturbances, too, disturbances common during Jahāṅgîr's reign in places remote from the centre on account of laxity of administrative control. During this period, Tulasîdāsa suffered from boils which were caused by the uprooting of hair. It is not known whether he got rid of this affliction at all or this was the cause of his death. He expired in 1680 Vik., i.e., in 1623 A.D., probably on the third day of the dark fortnight in the month of Shrāvaṇa.

Tulasîdāsa's personality can reasonably be reconstructed from this brief sketch of his life. It is clear how the worldly

happenings around him moulded his inner being. It is a sad commentary on our investigation that we do not know more, and with certitude, about the various circumstances and events of his life. It is, however, clear that a different set of circumstances and a different course of life could not have produced such a great seer-poet and devotee of Rāma as Tulasîdāsa.[1]

1. Translated from the Hindi original by Shrî Mahēndra Chaturvēdî.

5

Works of Tulasîdāsa: A Chronological Survey

DR. VISHWANĀTH MISRA

Scholars have not yet reached an agreement about the exact number of books Tulasîdāsa had written. The Nāgarî Prachāriṇi Sabhā of Vārāṇasî in its research-reports published from time to time has ascribed 37 books to this great poet. All of them, however, have not been accepted as the works of Tulasîdāsa, the renowned poet of the Akbar-Jahāṅgîr period. Scholars who have conducted systematic researches on this topic normally accept only the following works as authentic: *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî*, *Rāmalalā Nahchhû*, *Jānakî Maṅgala*, *Rāmāgyāprashna*, *Rāmacharitamānasa*, *Pārvatî Maṅgala*, *Gîtāvalî*, *Krishṇa-Gîtāvalî*, *Vinayapatrikā*, *Baravae Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bāhuka*, *Dōhāvalî* and *Kavitāvalî*. Bābā Bēni Mādhavadāsa in his verse—biography of the poet, *Moola Gōsāîṅ Charita*, was the first to suggest a chronological order of these works. Thereafter, Shrî Rāma Narēsha Tripāṭhî suggested a different chronology. Dr. Mātā Prasād Gupta delved deep into the matter and presented another chronological order. A proper study of the works of Tulasîdāsa can be made only after considering the points of view presented by these scholars.

Bābā Bēnî Mādhavadāsa in his *Moola Gōsāîṅ Charita*

says that Tulasîdāsa composed his works in the following order : *Gîtāvalî* (1616-28), *Krishṇa Gîtāvalî* (1616-28), *Rāmacharitamānasa* (1631-33), *Vinayapatrikā* (1639), *Dōhāvalî* (1640), *Satasaî* (1642), *Rāmalalā Nahchhû*, *Jānakî Maṅgala*, *Pārvatî Maṅgala*, *Bāhuka*, *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî* and *Rāmāgyā-Prashna* all in 1669-70 of the Vikrama era. In this order all the major works of Tulasîdāsa are supposed to have been written when he was young, in a period when his personality must have been in a process of formation; and all the minor and immature works in the old age when he should have grown mature and his personality fully developed. Actually, the scholars who have made a scientific study of this biography do not regard it as an authentic work; as such the chronological order suggested by Bābā Bēnî Mādhavadāsa cannot be accepted and has not been accepted.

Shrî Rāma Narēsha Tripāṭhî has tried to handle the problem more scientifically. All immature works have been assigned to the earlier period. Thereafter he has mentioned works which are written over long periods, such as collective works like *Kavitāvalî*, *Dōhāvalî*, *Baravae*, *Gîtāvalî*, and *Vinayapatrikā*. Others are said to have been written, in a shorter period and in between, or on, definite dates. Dr. Mātā Prasād Gupta also, whose approach has been still more scientific, has come almost to similar conclusions.

While young Tulasîdāsa appears to have been too engrossed in this world, and had great infatuation for his newly-married wife. It is said that once when his wife Ratnāvalî left for her mother's home with her brother, he followed her. She felt very awkward and scolded him, saying that if he were devoted to Rāma as passionately as to her, he would have got rid of all the worldly afflictions. Tulasîdāsa took this lesson to heart, left the place and, thereafter, completely gave himself to the worship of Rāma. It was then, perhaps, that he wrote his first book *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî*.

Shrî Rāma Narēsha Tripāṭhî is of the opinion that *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî* was the first literary composition of Tulasîdāsa.

Tulasîdāsa in his *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî* presents in the first seven verses the image of Sîtā, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa

sitting together and thereafter sings the praise of Rāma's name, describes this human body as perishable and talks of the greatness of Shrî Rāma. Then in the next twenty-six verses he describes the nature and characteristics of saintly persons; thereafter in nine verses the divine qualities of a saint have been narrated and in the last twenty verses, the value of peace has been described. This book as such marks a definite change in the life of our poet when he renounces worldly pleasures and takes to the path of devotion.

After thus taking up the path of devotion to Rāma, Tulasîdāsa decides to use his poetic faculties for narrating the life-story, the glorious acts and achievements of Rāma. The first book which he has written in this series is said to be *Rāmalalā Nahchhû*. He narrates here a social ceremony of Northern India, in which a barber's wife puts red colour on the nails of thc feet of a young boy, whose sacred-thread ceremony (*Yagyōpavîta Sanskāra*) or marriage is to be performed. Since Tulasîdāsa has described this ceremony as taking place at Ayōdhyā, it can definitely be acertained to be the ritual preceding the sacred-thread ceremony. Tulasîdāsa has presented a very lively description of this occasion. The pen-pictures of the wives of the blacksmith, milkman, tailor, gardener, shoemaker, barber, betel-seller and others are quite lively and in some cases outspoken too. Thus, this little narrative can definitely be said to have been written when the poet was young. This poem has been written in the Avadhî dialect, possibly because it describes a ceremony performed at Ayōdhyā and the poet has aptly used for it a folk verse-form *sōhar*. This small work of just twenty-two stanzas, though it does not contain high poetic qualities, evinces the poet's sincere devotion to Rāma, whom he regards as an incarnation of the Power Supreme.

Tulasîdāsa possibly wrote *Rāmāgyā-Prashna* after this. It deals with good and bad omens, within the framework of Rāma's life-story. Rāma's life-story has been narrated in this poem not as the poet later on conceived of it himself in his magnum opus the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, but as Vālmîki had described it in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Though this is a short narrative poem, it contains some episodes which have not been included in the *Mānasa*—such as the story of Shravaṇa Kumār,

the second banishment of Sîtā and her stay at Vālmîki's hermitage, the birth of Lava and Kusha, and their training by Vālmîki in singing the story of Rāma, Rāma's *Ashwamēdha-Yajna* and Sîtā's final resort to the lap of the mother earth. But, as I have said earlier, this poem has been written primarily to define good and bad omens, for the guidance of the common man in his day-to-day activities, and as such the Rāma-Kathā here serves as a mere framework.

After this, in his *Jānakî Maṅgala* Tulasîdāsa narrates the episode of Rāma's marriage with Sîtā. Here the story of Rāma's marriage has been presented more or less on the lines of Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa.* The incidents described are more or less on the lines of Vālmîki, but the personality of Rāma has been developed in a different form : he is described as an incarnation of the Power Supreme. In the description of Rāma's marriage ceremony, local colour has also been brought out conspicuously and folk elements are quite prominent. It is the first work which brings out the poetic faculty of the great poet, particularly in the use of language embellished with figures of speech.

After these early works which are somewhat immature, Tulasîdāsa took up some of his major works in different verse-forms which were written from time to time and later on collected together. *Baravae Rāmāyaṇa*, *Kavitāvalî*, *Dōhāvalî*, as also possibly *Krishṇa-Gîtāvalî* and *Gîtāvalî* were written in this manner. When the poet was composing different verses of these collective works he planned a major work on the life of Rāma, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, and after this work of epic length the poet wrote two more books, *Pārvatî-Maṅgala* and *Vinaya-Patrikā.* All these works deserve consideration at some length.

Tulasîdāsa has himself stated that he started writing *Rāmacharitamānasa* in 1631 of the Vikram era. The work was begun at Ayōdhyā and was later completed at Vārāṇasî. Scholars are of opinion that the poet must have taken four to five years in completing this monumental work. In this work, Tulasîdāsa has made a definite departure from Vālmîki and other poets who had narrated the story of Rāma's acts before him. He has presented Rāma as an incarnation of God the Almighty.

Tulasîdāsa has narrated Rāma's life right from his birth to his coronation and thereafter to the establishment of an ideal kingdom. The poet has metaphorically depicted Rāma's life as Mānasa i.e. as Manasarōvara, a mythological reservoir of water, on the four banks of which four batches of a speaker and a listener each have been set up to narrate various episodes of Rama's life through their dialogues. These four batches consist of Yājnavalka and Bharadwāja; Shiva and Pārwatî; Kākabhushuṇḍi and Garuḍa; and Tulasî and an assembly of saints.

Tulasîdāsa has described Rāma's life more or less in the mythological style and in doing so he has incorporated the essence of all the material that was available to his time. It is absolutely essential for a narrative poet to place himself in all the situations of life and experience the emotions aroused by them, and for this it is equally essential that the poet should possess a broad and also profound outlook. Tulasîdāsa possessed this and as such he has presented a very correct picture of life. He has, however, not confined himself to the presentation of reality alone; he has also conceived of the ideal form of life, i.e. life in its highest perfection. The main plot and subplots are closely knit together and have been arranged very artistically. The poet has recognised unmistakably the most touching incidents of Rāma's life and described them with all the emotional warmth needed for the purpose. The most touching incidents of Rāma's life are : his departure from Ayōdhyā together with Lakshmaṇa to look after the hermitage of Vishwāmitra, his marriage with Sîtā, his banishment for fourteen years, the meeting of Rāma and Bharata at Chitrakûṭa, the abdiction of Sîtā by Rāvaṇa and Rāma's miserable plight in her absence, the great war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, Rāma's return to Ayōdhyā, and finally his coronation. The poet has done full justice to all these episodes.

Tulasîdāsa has presented all types of human beings, men from all walks of life, of all age-groups, of all temperaments, of all social strata. Thus, the epic poem is an album of human life in all its phases, and in this respect the poet can be compared with the great English dramatist—Shakespeare. Whereas Shakespeare has depicted the varieties of human character in his thirty-seven plays, Tulasîdāsa has performed this major

task in one single book. Then, Tulasîdāsa has not portrayed these different characters as they are but also as they ought to be. Rāma, Sîtā, Kaushalyā, Bharata, Hanumān, Janaka, etc. are ideal characters; Dasharatha, Kaekēyî, Lakshmaṇa, Shatrughna, Sugrîva etc. have been presented as human beings with mixed qualities. The greatness of the poet, however, lies in his presentation of ideal human characters in a large number and almost from all walks of life.

The literary stature of Tulasîdāsa rests mostly on his idealistic vision. He has given expression in his *Mānasa* to almost all kinds of emotions, desires, and thoughts which generate in human mind, and he has presented them mostly in their sublimated forms. *Rāmacharitamānasa* is, thus, a monumental epic, a great work of devotion and a guide to practical life. It is really something unique in world literature.

Among the collective works, Tulasîdāsa appears to have first begun the composition of the different verses of *Kavitāvalî*. Scholars are of opinion that he must have begun writing in this verse-form—the *Kavitta*—in the year 1553, when he was young and continued the process till his old age. There are definite references to old age in some of his later verses. Quite a few manuscripts of this work contain, in their appendix, one more work of the poet—the *Hanumān-Bāhuka* or *Bāhuka*. The verses of this later work were definitely written in his old age when Tulasîdāsa had felt very severe pain in his arm and had appealed to Hanumān for relief.

The most important feature of this work is that it contains autobiographical references right from the childhood to the old age of the poet. He has also referred to certain astronomical events of his times. The description of the *Kaliyuga* in *Kavitāvalî* is very much the description of the social conditions of his own times. In one of the verses, the poet has also given expression to his patriotic sentiment and sung the glory of this great country.

Tulasîdāsa has divided this work into seven cantos. In the first six cantos he has narrated Rāma's life-story; but in the seventh the poet has given expression to his feeling of devotion towards a number of Hindû deities. In three stanzas an important episode in Lord Krishṇa's life, the dialogue between

Gopîs and Uddhava, has also been narrated. But the greatness of this work does not lie in these diversions; it really lies in its high poetic qualities. The earlier verses had been written when the poet was young and youthful, whereas the later were composed when he was aged, ripe with experience and had developed a mature outlook on life. Thus all the sentiments which are generated in human mind have been depicted here in detail and with consummate art.

Another collective work of Tulasîdāsa which he must have begun in an early age is *Baravae Rāmāyaṇa*. Baravae is a specific metre, and this book is the description of Rāma's life in this particular metre. The popular edition has sixty-nine verses and is divided into seven cantos. The last canto does not narrate any story, but stresses, instead, the importance of devotion to Rāma. The distinctive quality of this book is that it is free from repetitions. Its language is very chaste and the use of figures is so artistic that every verse appears to be an example of one or the other figure of speech. But it goes to Tulasî's credit that the perspicuity and tenderness of his poetic expression have not suffered in any way on this account.

The most prevalent verse-form in the time of our poet was the song (pada), and Tulasîdāsa has sung Rāma's story in this style also. These lyrics were written by him from time to time and later on collected in a book form entitled *Gîtāvalî*. The choice of themes in this book is very different from that of his other works. The poet has selected only the gentler aspects of Rāma's life which evoke softer emotions. Such episodes as Lakshmaṇa-Parashurāma dialogue, the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, the burning of Laṅkā have been left out altogether. On the other hand, Rāma's childhood, his exit to the forest, Kaushalyā's motherly bewailings over Rāma's banishment, fainting of Lakshmaṇa, the meeting of Bharata and Hanumān, Sîtā's exile, etc. have been sensitively portrayed here. The devotional poetry of the middle ages highlights three characteristics of Godhead, viz., beauty, decorum and strength. Tulasîdāsa's Rāma is endowed with all the three. However, in *Gîtāvalî* he appears more concerned with his beauty—the softer side of his character. Consequently, the feelings of affection, sorrow and devotion have found a warm expression in these lyrics.

Like all the maturer compositions of Tulasîdāsa, *Gîtāvalî* also shows his skilful and delicate use of the figures of speech. Its style is picturesque and craftmanship elegantly ornate.

Tulasîdāsa has also written some lyrics on the childhood and the amorous life of Lord Krishṇa. He had written sixty-seven lyrics which were later collected under the title of *Krishṇa Gîtāvalî.* These lyrics testify to Tulasîdāsa's lyrical skill and to his mature handling of the Braja dialect. Though Tulasîdāsa has described in these lyrics the amorous life of Lord Krishṇa, yet he has not given up his idealism and as such these lyrics leave a very ennobling effect on the reader.

Tulasîdāsa also composed a number of stray couplets which were later on collected in *Dōhāvalî.* In the edition of *Dōhāvalî* available today, there are 551 Dōhās of which some have been taken from Tulasîdāsa's other works such as *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî*, *Rāmāgyā-Prashna* and *Rāmacharitamānasa.* The subject-matter of these verses is diverse. Many of these verses throw significant light on the contemporary, political, economic, religious and social conditions as also on the poet's own life. But the most beautiful verses of this book are related to *Chātaka*, a specific Indian bird, which symbolises the ideal of undivided loyalty for saints and devotees.

Tulasîdāsa was a poet of very broad religious outlook. He has expressed his feelings of devotion to almost all the Hindû deities. As he was living in Vārāṇasî, he decided to compose a poem on Lord Shiva's marriage with Pārvatî. This book is *Pārvatî Maṅgala.* Though it is a small narrative poem, yet the poet has described the story of Pārvatî from her birth to her marriage with Lord Shiva. The source of this story is Kālidāsa's *Kumāra-Sambhava.* Many of the verses of *Pārvatî Maṅgala* bear marked resemblance with the verses of *Kumāra-Sambhava.* Like Tulasîdāsa's earlier work *Jānakî Maṅgala*, this poem has also been written in folk verse. *Pārvatî Maṅgala* holds an important place in the tradition of propitious poetry in Hindi.

The last and in one sense the most important work of Tulasîdāsa is *Vinaya-Patrikā.* Vinaya-Patrikā means a 'petition'. This is Tulasî's own petition to the court of Lord Rāma, the Emperor of Emperors, in order to obtain ultimate deliverance.

The poet has employed the metaphor of the Moghul Court for the purpose : after passing through seven courts and with the help and recommendation of the Lord's courtiers, he finally succeeds in obtaining the Lord's approval of his petition for compassion. However, from the choice of the subject-matter and the delineation of Rāma as Godhead, it becomes clear that *Vinaya-Patrikā* rises above the bounds of time and space. The vices which Tulasîdāsa has described in his own personality belong in actuality to all human beings. *Kaliyuga* has anguished not only Tulasîdāsa but the whole humanity. Thus Tulasîdāsa is a representative of the tortured millions. In this form *Vinayapatrikā* is a collective expression of popular sentiments visualised by a revolutionary poet.

Tulasîdāsa was a Vaiṣṇava who had full faith in the codes of conduct prescribed from time to time by old sages. His two distinctive principles were faith in Varṇa-Āshrama system and devotion to all deities. But he had an undivided loyalty to Rāma. Although these ideas are present in all the works of this great poet, *Vinaya-Patrikā* presents them in a very mature and powerful style. It is a specimen of devotional poetry par excellence. From both philosophical and artistic points of view it can be called a unique composition. Its language is mature, melodious and profound. It is really the culmination of Tulasîdāsa's devotional fervour and poetic skill.

In the end, summing up this study, I would humbly submit that this is just a tentative attempt to assign a chronological order to the works of Tulasîdāsa. Till today the biographical sketch of this great poet has not been drawn on scientific lines, and as such nothing can be said about the dates of his different works with absolute certainty. Thus a chronological order has only been suggested here and no definite dates have been assigned to any of the works. This order is based more or less on the development of ideas and artistic qualities in the writings of this great poet. And at present this alone is possible.

6

Philosophy of Tulasîdāsa

PROF. R C. PĀṆḌEYA

We cannot expect a poet to give any new philosophy. A poet uses the already-existing philosophical wisdom in his chosen field of reference and, depending upon his poetic vision, mental horizon and historical sense, gives new meaning to it. But like a philosopher a poet also has a world-view within which he interprets his experience and arranges them according to his scheme of values. He also, likewise, determines for himself a domain of disvalues. The difference, however, between a poet and a philosopher consists in the use of tools of interpretation and expression. The poet starts with his own personal experience, goes on to universalise it with a view to making it the experience of each and every person. A philosopher, on the other hand, making every personal experience depersonalised and ultimately so much universal that it could be objectively viewed by any person. Poetry thus retains its experiencial character, though it no longer remains individualistic ; what was one person's experience is made shareable qua experience by other persons. Philosophy aims at eliminating all personal references from an experience so that what was initially personal to him becomes an object for others to understand.

Viewed in this light one may conclude that poetry and philosophy being opposed to each other cannot be brought

together. But it would be a wrong conclusion. It is true that a poet makes every effort to preserve the experiencial character of the initial personal experience, but a philosopher in his zeal to make his personal experience universal makes experience an object of understanding, taking away from it all experiencial references. But what has become an object in philosophy can again be made a part of the poet's experiencial content ; just as a philosopher may convert a poet's experience into a depersonalised philosophical object. When we talk of a poet's philosophy we mean that philosophical content which the poet has accepted and assimilated in his universalised experience. On the other hand we do not talk of the poetry of philosophy because poetry, if accepted in philosophy, is made bereft of its essence, i.e. personal reference.

While discussing the philosophy of a poet we have to keep in mind certain constraints within which a poet has to work. As a poet he has to communicate his experience and not to talk about that experience. Since he cannot bodily propagate his experience to others, he creates a situation or a series of situations which would arouse in his readers the experience he wants to communicate. This creation of an appropriate situation is achieved by means of a special use of language, where the language no longer states facts but creates an experiencial situation. Philosophy, if at all to be used, has to help create such situations in poetry. For a poet philosophy is only a means and not an end. Though the use of philosophy in poetry is optional, yet when used it helps the poet in achieving universalisation of his experience. Poetic communication gets broader intellectual base through which the experience of the poet is also enriched and it is philosophical element assimilated in the poet's experience that defines the poet's world-view.

The aim of the present paper is to see the kind of philosophy Tulasîdāsa has used in his poetry and how it has helped him in constructing his world-view.

Tulasîdāsa was a Vaiṣṇava—devotee of Rāma, the incarnation (Avatāra) or Viṣṇu. In fact, for him writing poetry is a way of expressing his devotion to Rāma and therefore he does not approve of that poetry which does not sing the glory of

Rāma.[1] He goes to the extent of declaring that if a poem bears the name of Rāma, though in itself devoid of poetic qualities, is far superior to that which gives no place to Rāma.[2] As a devotee, Bhakta, he is totally committed to Bhakti which is of the highest value for him and consequently Bhakti defines his world-view.

Bhakti is both a means and an end. Bhakti leads to Rāma and when Rāma is reached Tulasîdāsa would still like to retain Bhakti.[3] Bhakti is a never-ending eternal attitude that a Bhakta seeks from his Rāma in blessing.[4] Again, when Rāma is pleased he grants Bhakti.[5] Understood in this sense Rāma is both the source and the goal of Bhakti. Lastly, Bhakti is not exclusive; anything which has some connection with Rāma falls within its purview.[6]

Bhakti has been defined in classical philosophical tradition as that state where man's total existence is submerged, as it were, in the colour of his God.[7] Devotion, dedication, love and other cognate English expressions are inadequate to express the idea of *anurakti* which forms the central part of this definition. Literally *anurakti* means "the state of being coloured after..." A Bhakta is totally absorbed, leaving no part of his being free from the influence of his God. It follows from this that he retains his distinction from God and consequently his freedom and identity as an individual. One implication of his interpretation of Bhakti is that though completely devoted to God he can exercise his freedom of choice and action and be himself morally responsible for his own acts. The moral responsibility gives ample scope to a Bhakta to correct himself and to intensify his Bhakti. One advantage of this philosophy is that a Bhakta relates his lapses, miseries, sorrows and personal calamities to his own action, thinking that there still remains some part of his being unsaturated in the 'colour of God'. He

1. Cf. *Rāmacharitamānasa*, 1.9.3
2. *Ibid.*
3. *R.*, 7.118.7.
4. *Vinayapatrikā*, 9.
5. Cf. *Vinayapatrikā*, 100.
6. *R.*, 1.7.2.
7. Cf. "Ishwarē parānuraktih bhaktih'—*Nāradabhaktisūtra*.

does not blame his God. Similarly all that is good, noble, blissful and pious in him is related to his Bhakti and to God which takes away his egoism from him. In other words, in Bhakti humility and self-criticism are two very important elements which follow from the moral freedom of the Bhakta.

Tulasîdāsa thinks that Bhakti cannot arise in the heart of a person unless God wants it.[1] This is an echo of the old Upaniṣadic philosophy which says that truth can be realised only by that person who has been chosen by truth itself.[2] The idea underlying this view is that Bhakta is a 'chosen person', distinct from the ordinary. But the choice by God does not absolve him from the consequences of any act done. One has to behave in a manner justifying his choice and has to strive constantly to continue to receive the grace of God, for he who gives Bhakti can withdraw it if the recipient is found unworthy.[3] This is a point which distinguishes Tulasîdāsa from many Bhakta poets and philosophers. There are scholars and *Āchāryas* who hold that Bhakti consists in complete surrender to God, treating the course of life as the expression of the will of God. According to this view the Bhakta loses all initiatives and acts as if he is a machine driven by the divine force. He abandons all efforts even to get rid of the effects of his own past *Karmas*, thinking that God will take care of them. Philosophically this view negates the law of *Karma*, so dear to the Indian mind. Tulasîdāsa seems to hold a different position. He follows the tradition of Bhakti when he says that he, with all his weaknesses, is at the mercy of Rāma.[4] But he prays Rāma to give him knowledge and wisdom whereby he does not deviate from the path of Bhakti and is freed from the effects of illusion (māyā) and consequent sufferings.[5] In other words, Bhakti is a source of knowledge about the reality ; by gaining this knowledge one realises one's own true nature ; the realisation of this truth guides actions and thus prevents a person from

1. *R.*, 1.37.6
2. यमेवैप वृणुते तेन लभ्य:
3. *Vinayapatrikā*, 172 and *R.*, 3 (last part).
4. Cf. *Vinayapatrikā*, 91 and 271.
5. *Ibid.*, 113.

their bad consequences.[1] Thus for Tulasîdāsa, Bhakti is an active state where the grace of God enlightens the agent, smooths his path by giving him strength to bear the suffering and by removing obstacles that may come in his way to the ultimate goal.[2] Complete surrender in the sense of inaction is not what Bhakti means to him.

For Tulasîdāsa Bhakti, though given by God, has to be used carefully by the Bhakta to achieve some end. The goal is to attract the attention of Rāma, to seek his pleasure and appreciation. In Indian philosophical tradition three distinct paths to achieve *mōkṣa*, the highest goal of human life—*parama puruṣārtha*—are recognised. All schools of Indian philosophy, except theistic Vēdānta and Pûrva Mîmāmsā, recognise knowledge of truth (jnāna) as the most important path leading to *mōkṣa*. Pûrva Mîmāmsā however believes in *karma* or ritualistic acts and theistic Vēdānta in Bhakti as efficacious means. There are thinkers who would like to combine two or all these three paths. Tulasîdāsa belongs to the Vaiṣṇava tradition in which Bhakti is given the most prominent place. But unlike many Vaiṣṇavas he is not prepared to accept Bhakti alone as the path to *Mōkṣa*.[3] For him Bhakti is the sole means of seeking the pleasure of Rāma but beyond the pleasure of Rāma is *mōkṣa*, liberation from the bondage of *karma*, rebirth and consequent sufferings.[4] This second stage is achieved by knowledge or jnāna which, when pleased, Rāma gives to a Bhakta.[5] One can see that for Tulasîdāsa Bhakti is not a direct cause of *mōkṣa* but a necessary first step to it. As long as jnāna is not given by Rāma a Bhakta is not freed from the illusory creation or Māyā which is the source of a person's bondage in this world.[6] Philosophically speaking, Bhakti is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of *Mōkṣa*.

We have said earlier that Bhakti is a means as well as an end. We have also explained Tulasîdāsa's position vis-a-vis

1. *Ibid.*, 102, and *R.*, 3-15.2-3.
2. *R.*, 7.120.21 and *Vinayapatrikā*, 136.
3. Rûpagōswāmin : *Bhakti-rasāmrita*, 1.2.48.
4. *R.*, 3.15.1.
5. Cf. *R.*, 7.88 ff.
6. *Vinayapatrikā*, 111, 116, 120 etc.

Bhakti, according to which Bhakti is a means to please Rāma. As far as Bhakti is concerned it is within his competence to seek the pleasure of Rāma, but to be pleased is the prerogative of Rāma which a Bhakta can only beseech but cannot enforce. In this sense Bhakti is a means and also an end because the realm beyond Bhakti is the realm of Rāma. Moreover, once the Bhakta through his intense devotion has reached the abode of Rāma, or has been able to attract the attention of Rāma, he would not like to move away from this position. In this state he begins to derive divine bliss which he would like to have as long as he does not get something higher.

Bhakti as understood by Tulasîdāsa is a state of mind characterised by active and intense devotion to Rāma. This state of mind can be sustained only when Rāma is a person. Hence psychologically the object of devotion has to be a concrete entity with which a Bhakta can establish his emotional relation and can expect a response from him. Therefore, Bhakti is possible only when God is *saguṇa*, endowed with all good qualities that a man can imagine; Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu and the son of Dasharatha, gifted with all imaginable noble qualities at their best, is therefore the object of Bhakti for Tulasîdāsa. But it would be wrong to say that this kind of Rāma is the end, the highest goal of a person. When Rāvaṇa was killed, all gods came to Rāma to pay their homage and to express their gratitude to him. Dasharatha also was present among gods. Tulasîdāsa states that Dasharatha could not attain *mōkṣa* because he was attached to Rāma, the *saguṇa* Brahman who was born as his son. As a result he, after death, was born again among gods. Rāma therefore gave him knowledge, so that he could attain *mōkṣa.*[1] In Tulasîdāsa's philosophy, therefore, though Bhakti involves an emotional attachment to *saguṇa* God, yet in order to achieve *parmārtha*, the highest goal of life, one has to transcend the *saguṇa* aspect of God and has to realise his *nirguṇa* state.[2] But then Bhakti is not possible with regard to that God who defies all qualities and characterisations. This absolute, abstract God, Brahman as he is

1. *R.*, 6.11.5-6 and 3.8.2.
2. Cf. *Vinayapatrikā*, 111, 120, 122, 123, 136 etc.

called in Indian philosophical tradition, can at least be described in negative terms as 'not this'—*nēti nēti*—after the Upaniṣads. Any attempt to ascribe any quality to him would amount to indirectly asserting that there is some domain which Brahman does not include within him and to that extent he is deficient. Tulasîdāsa is not prepared to accept the position that anything real and conceivable by the human mind could remain outside Brahman.[1]

Since there is nothing outside Brahman, he cannot be distinguished from it. Similarly no distinction is possible within Brahman as that would amount to saying that a part of Brahman is not the whole of Brahman. In other words a part would logically negate the whole. Thus the absolute real has to remain free from any kind of distinction (*bhēda*)—internal or external. Even the person who aspires to achieve *mōkṣa* is ontologically not distinct from Brahman. Such state of realisation is not possible as long as Bhakta is able to address his God as 'you'[2]—in other words, *saguṇa* Bhakti has to give place to *nirguṇa* knowledge (jnāna) whereby he realises that he is not different from Brahman. This state is achieved, according to Tulasîdāsa, by means of *vivēka* or jnāna, and a person who has jnāna is specially liked by God.[3]

Brahman as nirguṇa absolute, free from all distinctions, is beyond speech and discursive thought.[4] He is all-inclusive and the basis of all that exists; he is the supreme reality and is the cause of it all. But logically a thing can be the cause of another only by undergoing a process of change. The absolute Brahman who transcends all distinctions cannot undergo any change. For a change to take place certain conditions must be fulfilled. If the cause changes itself there must be some motivating force to affect that change; if on the other hand, it wants to change something else, that something must exist independent of the changing cause. The first is the position of the Sāmkhya system and many schools of theistic Vēdānta and is

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 54 and *R.*, 1.12, 1.143.
2. *R.*, 3.14.2-3
3. *R.*, 1.21.7.
4. *R.*, 7.71.1-8.

known as the transformation theory (pariṇāmavāda) of causation. The second position is propounded by the *Vaishēṣika* system and known as creation theory (ārambhavāda). In both the cases the effect so created is real. Tulasîdāsa seems to be against both the positions. In the *Vinayapatrikā* (111) he rejects all that view which regards the creation as real.[1]

Philosophers have pointed out logical difficulties in ascribing any change to absolute Brahman. It is said that Brahman has no cause, no desire or purpose to create, as he is *anîha*. Again, there is nothing else besides Brahman out of which he could fashion this universe. Therefore, real creation is ruled out. This is the position of the Advaita Vēdānta which believes in non-dualism—advaita. Tulasîdāsa in all his writings seems to accept this non-dualistic position when he talks of *nirguṇa* Brahman.

But, then, how can one talk of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* Brahman in the same breath ? There is a recurring tension between these two positions in the work of Tulasîdāsa. The first question raised in the beginning of his *Rāmacharitamānasa* by Bhāradvāja is : who is Rāma — the one who was the son of Dasharatha or someone else who is worshipped by Shiva ?[2] Further, Satî expressed her doubt about Rāma to her husband Shiva: how can absolute Brahman be born as a human being ?[3] Later on again Pārvatî asks a similar question. If Rāma is the son of Dasharatha, Pārvatî says, how could he be Brahman ? But the sages have said that Rāma is the beginningless Brahman and Shiva himself worships Rāma.[4] In all these instances one can see that the poet is trying to show the relation between *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* Brahman. Unlike theistic Vēdāntins he is not prepared to reject *nirguṇa* Brahman as a figment of imagination and also unlike an orthodox Advaita Vēdāntin he is prepared to accept *saguṇa* Brahman along with *nirguṇa* Brahman. But then how does he accomplish this seemingly impossible task ?

1. *Vinayapatrikā.*
2. *R.*, 1.45 ff.
3. *Ibid.*, 50.
4. *R.*, 1.107 ff.

A careful study of the work of Tulasîdāsa reveals that he was an Advaitin to the core. But his advaita philosophy does not follow the orthodox line. By accepting that the ultimate reality is *nirguṇa*, changeless, one, *sachchidānanda*, beyond speech and thought, he declares his allegiance to advaita tenets. His advaitic affiliation is further confirmed by his resort to the concept of māyā. In hundreds of places in his works he refers to this māyā as the cause of the universe. Māyā, of the nature of delusion, causes things, though not appearing real ontologically. It is operative, but its operation does not affect the real base on which the māyā operates. Because of māyā Brahman appears to be changing, assuming the form of individual *jîva* and the material world, but in reality neither is in an any sense different from Brahman. Once the jîva starts thinking himself to be independent, consequences rooted in ignorance follow in the form of repeated birth and death.

Since Brahman is formless he does not create, yet he is the basis for the māyā to operate. In this respect causation is comparable to illusion. In Advaita Vēdānta the paradigm case of such causation, known as *Vivaratavāda*, is the illusion of a snake in a piece of rope. No theistic Vēdāntin would accept this as an explanation of causation. In order, therefore, to emphasise his advaitic affiliation, he opens his *Rāmāyaṇa* with a reference to māyā as the cause of entire existence and illustrates the operation of māyā with the help of the example of a snake appearing in a piece of rope.[1] There are many places where he repeats this example and also uses many others which have been given in advaita vēdānta texts.[2] There are passages both in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Vinayapatrikā* which strengthen our conviction that Tulasîdāsa has propounded Advaita philosophy.

The position of māyā in Tulasîdāsa's writings needs some clarification. The nature and function of māyā are invariably illustrated with the help of examples drawn from illusion. A series of *padas* in the *Vinayapatrikā* is devoted to the exposition of Māyā.[3] In nature māyā has the power to create things

1. *R.*, 1.1.6.
2. *Vinayapatrikā*, 111, 115, 116, 119 etc.
3. *Ibid.*

provided there is a basis, *adhiṣṭhāna* as it is called in Advaita Vēdānta. One can have the illusion of snake only when there a piece of rope. The rope is the basis but it remains unaffected by and does not participate in the act of creation. But once illusion has arisen it creates the semblance of reality, and a person under its spell will continue to treat the creation of māyā as real as long as the illusion is not over. In all these cases Brahman or Nirguṇa Rāma is the basis. Māyā has no place in Brahman as a separate entity. This is the reason that while talking about this Brahman, Tulasîdāsa does not accord any place of Māyā.[1] But while explaining the genesis of the universe he mentions māyā only in relation to the universe. In other words, Brahman in himself (svarûpēna) is free from māyā but in relation to the universe he is covered by Māyā.[2] The former is *nirguṇa* and the latter is *saguṇa* Brahman. But the two Brahmans are indeed not different; they represent two aspects of the same reality depending upon two different perspectives from which one sees it.[3]

It is in the context of *saguṇa* Brahman that Tulasîdāsa speaks of Rāma and Sîtā. Sîtā represents Māyā and is depicted as a partner; in fact, she alone is active in creation.[4] A bhakta, a man of this world, a product of Māyā, therefore, can worship Rāma with Sîtā with great facility. He salutes the entire universe because he sees in it Sîtā with Rāma, implying that this universe is a product when Brahman combines with the active principle of Māyā.[5] Hence Bhakti of *saguṇa* Brahman, if practised carefully, leads to the bliss of Rāma who imparts the knowledge of Reality in its true colours.[6] Tulasîdāsa always prays to Rāma to free him from the influence of Māyā as he in his *saguṇa* state is the controller of Māyā.[7] Hence Bhakti to be followed by jnāna, through the bliss of Rāma, defines the

1. *R.*, 7.71.7-8.
2. *R.*, 3.39.
3. *R.*, 1.115
4. *R.*, 1.151.4
5. *R.*, 1.7.2
6. *Vinayapatrikā*, 115 and ff.
7. Cf. *Vinayapatrikā*, 122.

scheme laid down in the works of Tulasîdāsa. One can see that this is a point at which Tulasîdāsa departs from the orthodox Advaita Vēdānta. Shankara would not agree to any position which combines jnāna with karma or bhakti.[1] An Advaitin like Maṇḍana Mishra, who advocates such a combination, is nearer to the position held by Tulasîdāsa with one notable exception, viz., that whereas Maṇḍana and others advocate the combination of jnāna with karma, Tulasîdāsa propagates the combination of jnāna with Bhakti.

Rāma is said to be an incarnation (avatāra) of saguṇa Brahman. But an incarnation, according to Tulasîdāsa, is in no way less than Brahman[2] himself. Therefore, the son of Dasharatha is the Brahman who has assumed the form of a human being to protect his Bhakta against evil forces and to help them to attain *mōkṣa*.[3] In this sense avatāra means assuming a form by the formless Brahman,[4] and this act of assuming a form by nirguṇa Brahman depends entirely on His will.[5]

In the last Kāṇḍa of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* Tulasîdāsa introduces[6] a discussion between the sage Lōmasha and Kākabhushuṇḍi on the relative merit of the worship of saguṇa and nirguṇa Brahman. The former emphasises the supremacy of the nirguṇa but the latter is unable to comprehend it; instead, he prefers the saguṇa form. One could see in this philosophically important dialogue a concern for easy comprehension of truth by a person who is a product of Māyā. The sage Lōmasha becomes angry with Kākabhushuṇḍi for his insistence on the saguṇa form. This leads to the reflection that though a person may talk about nirguṇa yet in his physical existence, which is due to Māyā, he cannot get rid of emotions like anger based on an awareness of distinction. Therefore, as long as one is not able to get rid of this awareness of distinction, one can at best follow such a path of realisation as recognises this awareness. Such a path is Bhakti. But Bhakti does not reject the nirguṇa or

1. Cf. Shankarabhāṣya on *Brahmasûtra*, 1.1.1 and 4.
2. Cf. *Brahmasiddhi*, Brahmakāṇḍa.
3. *R.*, 1.198.
4. *R.*, 1.120 ff.
5. *R.*, 1.192.
6. Cf. *R.*, 7.110 ff.

advaita; it rather brings one nearer to it. In this sense, for Tulasîdāsa, there is no opposition between nirguṇa and saguṇa, between jnāna and bhakti.

There are then distinctions at three levels: at the ontological level we have the distinction between nirguṇa and saguṇa and at the practical level we have a distinction between jnāna and bhakti. The third level of distinction is socio-religious, i.e., the distinction between Rāma the son of Dasharatha and a part of the socio-political organisation of his time and Rāma the supreme reality in his nirguṇa and saguṇa aspects. Because Tulasîdāsa is an Advaitin in principle, he seeks to reconcile these distinctions at the same level and also at these three levels. We shall briefly try to show in these concluding paragraphs how Tulasîdāsa achieves this end. The distinction between saguṇa and nirguṇa has been reconciled by the principle of māyā. But the question as to why nirguṇa Brahman at all takes the help of Māyā is not answered. This is in fact the weakest point in the Advaitic philosophy. Tulasîdāsa, however, tries in his own way to answer this question by maintaining that nirguṇa becomes saguṇa for the love of his devotees.[1] It is true that from the point of view of Brahman, the devotee is not distinct from him, but from the point of view of the devotee Brahman is yet to be achieved, hence distinct. So at the back of the principle of Māyā is the recognition of the devotee's point of view. In other words, though in reality the devotee is not different from Brahman, yet as long as he considers himself different, his thinking, as it were, makes Brahman assume forms through the power of Māyā. The devotee sees in it a recognition of his devotion, but Brahman being *anîha* does actually nothing of the kind. So the introduction of the purpose (i.e. the welfare of a devotee) bridges the gap between nirguṇa and saguṇa. In addition, it recognises the importance of bhakti. Viewed in this light Bhakti is that mental attitude which considers this world of distinctions and differences as the manifestation of Brahman and, for that reason, real. Jnāna, on the other hand, rejects these distinctions and ultimately refuses to accord any place to this world in the scheme of reality. Jnāna is negative as its

1. *R.*, 1.12.3-5.

operation cuts at the root of the world of distinctions, and through the ruins of this discarded world the path to Brahman is paved. Bhakti, on the other hand, is positive as it sees Brahman in every nook and corner of this world, and having seen him everywhere a bhakta ultimately realises that this world in itself is unreal; it is nothing but Brahman. So, ultimately the effect is identical—the realisation that Brahman alone is real, though initially jnāna and bhakti seem to be opposed to each other. The distinction relates to the position of Rāma as the son of Dasharatha vis-a-vis Rāma the Deity, Brahman. Tulasîdāsa seeks to reduce this distinction by introducing the concept of *nāma* (name). In the Bālakāṇḍa (Dōhā, 18 ff.) he discusses at length the importance of the name of Rāma (Rāma-nāma). He says that the speech and its content are like water and wave.[1] They are, in other words, distinguishable but not separable. A thing of form (rûpa) depends on its name as it cannot be known without the name. Without its name an object cannot be known in its specifications even though it is placed on the palm of a person.[2] In this sense Rāma-nāma is superior to Rāma the person or even Rāma the Brahman.[3] This philosophy of the relation between a word and an object is not new to Indian tradition[4] but Tulasîdāsa's application of it for the resolution of the distinction between saguṇa and nirguṇa, between Rāma the person and Rāma the Brahman and also between jnāna and bhakti is unique. In fact, between the nirguṇa and the saguṇa Brahman, the nāma acts as an interpreter, linking the two.[5] The identity of the two is established because they both are known by the same name, i.e. Rāma or Brahman. Similarly the son of Dasharatha and Brahman, both being known by an identical name, Rāma, are not separate. Thus, the son

1. *R.*, 1.18.
2. *R.*, 1.20. 4-5.
3. Cf.for contrast between Rāma-nāma and Rāma the person, *R.*, 1.23 f. and 1.25.
4. For a detailed discussion of this philosophy cf. Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadîya;* Brahmakāṇḍa; R.C. Pāṇḍēya, *The Problem of Meaning in Indian Philosophy*, Ch. X; R.C. Pāṇḍēya, *The Philosophy of Name* in *Perspectives on Guru Nānak*, pp. 76-83.
5. *R.*, 1.20.8.

of Dasharatha, the nirguṇa and the saguṇa Brahman being called by the name Rāma are identical and therefore bhakti of Rāma would definitely consist in repeating this name. By implication, devotion to Rāma as a person or to the image of Rāma is of an inferior type in comparison to the repetition of Rāma-nāma. So the concept of Rāma-nāma is the most comprehensive concept connecting all the three levels of distinction. It is effectively used to establish the Advaita philosophy and to show the proper perspective in which distinctions should be seen.

Rāma-nāma is a name and as such it is just an adjunct (upādhi) of Brahman,[1] though superior to rûpa or guṇa. The nirguṇa Brahman which is devoid of all adjuncts, all rûpa or guṇa is of the nature of pure experience, beyond all speech and form. This is the realm of *mōkṣa* but this realm is also achieved by means of Rāma-nāma.[2] This realm is what the Upaniṣads and the Advaitins like Shankara would describe as the ultimate value of human life by rejecting all lesser values. But for Tulasîdāsa, this very ultimate value can be achieved not by rejecting any lesser value but by accepting all the values in a synthetic whole, assigning to each value its proper place. It is really a great achievement as he does all this in poetry; this task of grand synthesis is difficult to achieve even in pure philosophy.

1. *R.*, 1.20.
2. *R.*, 1.21.2.

7

Theology of Tulasîdāsa

PROF. R. K DĀSGUPTA

In the Sanskrit invocation in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* Tulasîdāsa says about the matter of his poem that it is derived from two sources—(a) *nānāpurāṇanigamāgamasammatam yadrāmāyaṇē nigaditam*—that which is told in the *Rāmāyaṇa* according to the purāṇas, nigama, that is, the *vēdas* and *āgama*, that is, tāntric texts, (b) *kwachidanyatōpi*—some other sources also. The two lines would mean three sources and not two if, following F.S. Growse and W.D.P. Hill, we separate *nānāpurāṇanigamāgama* from *Rāmāyaṇē* which the syntax of the verse does not seem to justify. It is curious that A.G. Atkins ignores the niceties of such distinctions, probably for the sake of his metrical finesse and even does not translate the expression *kwachidanyatōpi* which is a particularly significant part of the statement. The poet's natural modesty would not allow him to say more about what he could legitimately claim as 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.' The Bengali editor of the poem has annotated *kwachidanyatōpi* briefly but unmistakably as *nijēra anubhava*—his own experience. The poet's own experience is indeed, as it must be in a great poem like *Rāmacharitamānasa*, the vital breath of the work : it is what makes it poetically a great deal more than a vernacular rendition of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and philosophically a great deal more than

a restatement of the vēdāntic doctrine.

Tulasîdāsa was aware of his responsibility in respect of this great task of giving a new meaning and a new dimension to traditional wisdom by adding to it something of his own. For it was not just a question of inserting some new ideas in the poem. He took upon himself the much larger task of creating a whole structure of religious and ethical thought which would be acceptable to the unsophisticated masses and at the same time bring him the delight of giving an expression to his spiritual and moral being. In the Sanskrit verse from which I have just quoted he says that he is writing this *raghunātha-gāthā svāntah sukhāya*, for 'his soul's delight'. His intent is to 'express' the Deity 'unblamed', and only the Deity's grace can enable him to do so. In Dōhā 14 (b) in Bālakāṇḍa the poet says '*sō na hōi vinu vimala mati mōhi mati bala ati thōra*', 'such verses need clear intellect and my intellectual power is slight'. But the theological ideas of the poem have a clarity which only extraordinary intellectual powers can give. The poet did not know them to be really intellectual powers because what he said in the poem came to him not as an achievement of his dialectical prowess but as the deepest realisations of his spiritual self. When Eliot says that 'neither Shakespeare nor Dante did any real thinking' he does not forget to add that behind 'Dante's great poetry there is a great philosophy.' Behind Tulasîdāsa's great poetry too there is a great philosophy. That philosophy was a part of his self-realisation. The poetry and the philosophy of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* strike us as the testament of a great soul, and they go together because they are the two sides of the same experience. Coleridge once remarked that 'he who first sought to know in order to be was the first philosopher.' There is not a word in the great Hindi poem which is not a part of the poet's being. And as we try to recapture our response to the philosophy of the poem we recall the words of Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* : 'No man was ever a great poet without at the same time being a profound philosopher.' The profound philosophy of the *Rāma-charitamānasa* can be explained only by scholars. I can only put together the impressions of a common reader of this great work which A.A. Macdonell rightly called a 'kind of Bible for

millions of Hindûs who inhabit the vast tracts between Bengāl and the Panjāb, the Himalaya and the Vindhya range.' An American scholar remarks in his book *The Hindu Tradition*, published ten years ago, that 'Tulasîdāsa's work was the Bible of India, but that comparison is inadequate now, for Tulasîdāsa's book is probably better known today in north India than the Bible is in any country in the West.'

But what makes it the Bible of the Hindûs of north India? Grierson said something still more significant about the poem than what is conveyed by the phrase 'the Bible of India'. He said that no figure except Buddha so profoundly influenced as many Indians as did Tulasîdāsa. And what Grierson adds to explain what he means is even more significant. 'Pandits may speak of the Vēdas and Upaniṣads', he says, 'and a few may even study them ; others may say that their beliefs are represented by the Purāṇas ; but for the great majority of the people of Hindustān, learned and unlearned, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulasîdāsa is the only standard of moral conduct.' A work which large masses of people can read in their vernacular or can hear sung to them by those who can read it must obviously be more popular than philosophical texts written in Sanskrit. But it is not this circumstance alone which gives the *Rāmacharitamānasa* its unique place in the spiritual and moral life of the Indian people. When we hear Grierson say that the poem has replaced, for the common people, the Vēdas, the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas, we at once recall Tulasî's *nānāpurāṇanigamāgama-sammatam yad nigaditam rāmāyaṇē* and assume that the poet offers in his work a distillation of the wisdom embodied in the canonical texts of the Hindûs. This distillation itself was a great task when the texts represented diverse doctrines of diverse schools and encouraged a bewildering variety of beliefs and rituals. While there was on the one hand grossest type of polytheism, there was on the other a kind of severe monism which seemed to be the very negation of any form of religion which involved a God-man relationship. And there were cults which tended to become opposed to each other, the Shaivas and Vaiṣṇavas sometimes appearing as rival faiths. There were also sharp philosophical differences amongst systems which were concerned more with the niceties of formulation than with a

living faith.

In a situation like this a religious leader can preach tolerance, a liberal outlook in matters of faith, a kind of *laissez-faire* in religious life that would give everybody his freedom of belief and practice. But this would have been a negative approach to religion and it is prompted by what Gibbon has called a form of fashionable antinomianism. Tulasî was too profoundly religious to think in terms of such facile compromises. The other alternative was to devise with great intellectual skill an imposing structure of an eclectic religious philosophy which would bring together diverse doctrines and beliefs into a new and harmonious relationship. Again Tulasî was too profoundly religious to care for such an intellectual enterprise. Moreover, he had no desire to be an arbiter between rival schools. His great purpose was to give his people a living God. This overmasters his poetic and philosophic intent. But what is striking in his work is that he presents this faith in terms of the highest philosophical wisdom of the Hindûs. His poetry gives a new life to that wisdom and a new spirit. At the same time there are many passages in his poem which show his concern about the philosophical consistency of that wisdom.

We can simplify the whole business of bringing out the philosophy of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* by labelling it as a poem with a vēdāntic philosophy. But that is not saying anything in particular when vēdāntism represents a variety of doctrines. F.S. Growse so simplifies the business when he says in his introduction to his English translation of the poem published in 1877-1881 that Tulasî's 'theological and metaphysical views are pantheistic in character, being based for the most part on the teaching of the later Vēdāntists as formulated in the *Vēdānta-sāra* and some elaborately expounded in the *Bhagavadgîtā*. By *Vēdānta-sāra* he certainly means Rāmānuja's work of that name but to say that our poet is only a Rāmānujî Vēdāntist is to ignore the clear monistic overtones of his philosophy which also affiliates him to Shankarite Vēdānta. It appears Growse was not acquainted with the Vēdāntic texts. While he quotes from St. Ambrose, the fourth-century Latin Father, to explain Tulasî's idea of the incomprehensibility of the Deity and from Rudolph Hermann Lotze, the nineteenth-century German

idealist philosopher to explain his philosophy of Divine Personality he has nothing to say about either the Upaniṣads or the *Brahma-Sûtra* or the commentaries of Shankara and Rāmānuja. Growse, however, makes one statement in his introduction which has an important bearing on our understanding of the religious philosophy of the poem. 'Tulasîdāsa's *Rāmāyaṇa*', he says, 'is a passionate protest against the virtual atheism of philosophical Hindû theology.' Although the opinion is obviously warped by the typical Christian attitude towards the Vēdānta, it has some significance as a recognition of the value of the poem as the philosophy of a living faith in a personal God.

In this century J.N. Carpenter created some confusion when he said in his *Theology of Tulasîdāsa* (1918) that Tulasî 'stands quite clear in his repudiation of the impersonal Brahma of Shankara.' F.E. Key links the religious philosophy of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* with that of the *Adhyātma Rāmayāṇa* in his *A History of Hindi Literature* (1920) and this too is a curious instance of indifference to Tulasî's achievement as the author of a philosophical poem. In the same year appeared J.N. Farquhar's *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* in which the author said that 'the teaching of the poem contains many advaitic elements which strike one as very strange beside the personality of the God of love whom Tulasî adores.' Farquhar also said that the poem 'is overburdened with the whole vast weight of Hindû orthodoxy and mythology.' A year later Estlin Carpenter said in his Hibbert Lectures published as *Theism in Medieval India* that 'the poem was the last attempt to use the epic as a vehicle of religious truth', but he said nothing significant about the nature of the religious truth.

An analysis of the distinctive features of Tulasî's philosophy of religion could be made by our own scholars. But it is unfortunate that even a scholar like Kshitimōhan Sēn considers the *Rāmachritamānasa* as but a Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa* in his *Medieval Mysticism in India* (1930) an English translation of which appeared in 1935. In his Norman Wait Harris Foundation lectures delivered in Northwestern university in 1926 and published as *Hindû Mysticism* the following year S.N. Dās Guptā mentions Tulasî as the 'greatest Hindû poet of India',

but about his philosophy he says nothing more than that he 'accepted the Hindû mythology and the theory of the incarnation of God, the appearance of the attributeless God as a God of infinite attributes.' It is, however, in Pîtāmbar Datta Barathawāl's *The Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry* that we have a positively misleading view of Tulasî's theology. Referring to the episode of *Bhushunḍi* and Lōmasha in Uttarakāṇḍa, Barathawāl says, this is intended to be a 'fling at the nirguṇa Bhakti of Kabîra and his followers.' There is not a word of polemical character in any of the works of Tulasî who valued reconciliation in matters of belief and avoided controversy.'

In the last fifteen years the religious philosophy of Tulasî has been generally considered as not only orthodox but self-contradictory. In his book *Hinduism* (1962) R.C. Zachner says that Tulasî 'sometime exalts the personal God above the impersonal Absolute, sometimes he considers him only as an aspect of it.' In his English edition of *Vinaya Patrikā* (1966) F.R. Allchin affirms that it is the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* which was 'responsible for transforming the worship of Rāma from the Nirguṇa form of Kabîra to the Saguṇa form of Tulasîdāsa. It was also the source of the strongly advaitist flavour of Tulasî's writings.' Drawing on P.C. Bagchî's *Studies on the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (1935) Allchin argues that this Sanskrit text of 4000 verses was an 'attempt to reconcile the advaita Vēdānta point of view with the Rāmāite teachings of Rāmānanda's disciples and here too Tulasî follows it closely.' It is indeed a pity that Allchin does not bring out Tulasî's own distinctive contribution to the synthesis of Advaita Vēdānta and the philosophy of Bhakti.

Our approach to any philosophy of bhakti which we necessarily connect with the philosophy of Rāmānuja is often vitiated by what we mention in English as qualified monism which is, as M. Hiriyanna says in his *Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (1949) is a misleading translation of *Vishiṣṭādvaita.* Secondly, it is an error to imagine that Shankarite advaita is a non-theistical doctrine and that the Upaniṣadic doctrine of *tat tvam asi,* which is the central teaching of Shankara, negates religion. Rāmaprasāda, the eighteenth century Bengali Shākta poet, said 'ore chinî haoa bhāla nay man chni khete bhālabāsi'—I do not

wish to be sugar because I wish to taste sugar. But Shankara's *advaita* does not repudiate love of God : it is indeed the high romance of divine love, a state of bliss in which the lover and the beloved lose their separate identities in union. We do not know what tears of love were frozen in the eyes of a man who followed his God to the furthest ends of space and time to behold him there as pure being which no words can describe. To build a void as the abode of a Deity dissolved in 'nothingness' is the very infinity of the life of the spirit. Shankara did not mean an abstraction by nirguṇa Brahma : and his Absolute is Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute and Bliss Absolute. He explains this in his commentary on Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma-Sûtra*, section 6, sûtras 12-19.

The most significant achievement of Tulasîdāsa as a religious thinker is that he has integrated the essence of *advaita vēdānta* with a living faith in a personal God. His Rāma is the Absolute incarnate in history, the Eternal descending into time. He conceived his *Rāmacharitamānasa* as an epic of the Absolute in time, as a myth of a new metaphysic of religion which his people could understand and accept as the breath of their spiritual and moral life. It is said about Rāmānuja's philosophy that it is a synthesis of the *prasthānatraya*—the Upaniṣads, Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma-Sûtra* and the *Bhagvad-Gîtā*. The *Rāmacharitamānasa* presents this synthesis in the form of a myth. That myth is as much the expression of the entire faith of a people as it is the lyric of a deeply felt personal experience. Sri Aurobindo has called the *Rāmacharitamānasa* a combination of 'lyric intensity' and 'the sublimity of the epic imagination' and Louis Renou calls it 'a lyrical epic'. The lyricism of the work is in this personal realisation of a faith which the poet wanted to share with his people. Recent religious historiography speaks of the spiritual development of a nation through an interaction between the ideas of the 'above' and the ideas of 'below', the ideas of the intellectual elite and the ideas of the masses. In the *Rāmacharitamānasa* the philosophy of the 'above' achieves a new dimension through its assimilation by the masses in terms of their ideas. If ever in our future spiritual development we must think of a vēdānta for the people we must begin with this Hindi poem of the sixteenth century.

Those of us who find only Rāmānuja in the poem must not forget Tulasî's epithets for the Supreme Being—*anîha, arûpa, anāma, anādi, avināsî, avikārî, abhēda* etc. And the poet who sings the deeds of his Lord in his epic has really nothing to say about his true nature. Dōhā 12 in *Bālakāṇḍa* is the essence of the poet's philosophy of the supreme Being.

sārada sēsa mahēsa vidhi, āgama nigama purāna
nēti nēti kahi jāsu guna karahiṅ nirantara gāna

Shāradā, shēṣa, mahēshvara, Brahmā, the vēdas, Purāṇas and āgamas are ever singing his perfection, yet can but say "not this, not this".

8

Tulasî's Concept of Bhakti

PROF. R. K. TRIPĀṬHÎ

Tulasîdāsa enjoys a unique position among the saint-poets of India. Though he was born in an age of sages and saints, he was able to outshine them all. The eminent saint-poets had individuality of their own. While adhering to tradition, each one of them gave a new meaning to it. Tulasîdāsa, like other saints, accepts tradition, but he also makes his own contribution, adding a new flavour and a new colour to all that he inherits from his predecessors. This is true of his poetry, of his conception of society, bhakti and jnāna. Here we are concerned only with his views regarding bhakti.

Traditionally four kinds of devotees (bhaktas) have been mentioned—the *arthārthî*, the *ārta*, the *jijnāsu*, and the *jnānî*. Of these the first two, the *arthārthî* and the *ārta*, would belong to the class of persons who adore God from motives of selfishness. There is, however, a difference between this type of devotee and the ordinary man who serves somebody to achieve a selfish end. The *arthārthî*, no doubt, expects something from God, but unlike the ordinary man, he expects it only from God and from none else. So also the *ārta* is one who has lost all hope, can depend on nobody in the world, and, therefore, falls back on God as his only resort. In both cases, there is some desire or the other which the devotee wants to gratify, but that

only in relation to God. There is single-minded devotion, feeling of helplessness, and exclusive dependence on God. In both cases, God is taken to be primarily an Almighty Power on whom one can depend. The beginning of religious consciousness is always to be found in some kind of awareness of a mysterious power. God is known, to begin with, as a power. Since initially we are not completely free from desire, all bhakti in its initial stage is *sakāma bhakti* or motivated devotion, and it is only later that other aspects of God are revealed and other forms of devotion are evolved. The devotee discovers, for example, that the Lord is not only Almighty, He is also all kindness and compassion. This combination of power and compassion attracts the devotee for two reasons. But a stage is reached when he becomes completely free from desires, and then another aspect of God is revealed to him : His beauty, His irresistible charm. In one place Tulasîdāsa says that there are only two ways : either you love Rāma or Rāma loves you. The stage when Rāma begins to love the devotee is almost the highest stage of bhakti.

The different forms of devotion are very appropriately illustrated in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. Sugrîva and Vibhîṣaṇa are attracted primarily by the power of Rāma and love Him for that reason. Kaushalyā and Dasharatha, Bharata and Lakshmaṇa have a different relationship : they consider Rāma their own kith and kin. Then there are devotees who are charmed by the beauty of Rāma and regard the child Rāma as the object of their devotion. The most outstanding among such devotees are Shiva and Kākabhushuṇḍi ; they love the child Rāma. The distinctive feature of devotion to the child Rāma is that there is no desire in the devotee ; he expects nothing from Rāma ; he just likes to enjoy His company, and nothing more. In contrast, the devotee of the warrior Rāma loves Him for His power. Rāma as a child has beauty but no power ; love for Him, therefore, is disinterested. The object of Tulasî's devotion is the warrior Rāma : there was in the mind of the poet a desire for the establishment of Rāma-rājya, a welfare state. The following famous couplet confirms this view. When Gōswāmîjî was shown at Mathurā the idol of Kṛishṇa with a flute, he uttered the following couplet :

"Kā barāṇo chhabi ājaki, bhalē banē hō Nātha,
Tulasî mastaka taba navai, jaba dhanusa bāna lēu hātha."

(How can I describe your beauty today, O Lord ! You look superb. But Tulasî will bow down to you only when you take a bow and arrow in your hand.) Thus, the poet wanted Krishṇa to appear as Rāma with His bow and arrow. Yet he did not underestimate the beauty of Rāma. He never tires of singing of Rāma's beauty which bewitches everybody who sees Him. People are charmed by his personality even without knowing of His Power or His qualities. Tulasî's Rāma is the symbol of all the three qualities—power, virtue, and beauty. The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* plentifully illustrates all these three aspects of Rāma's character, and the implication seems to be that such perfection can be had only in God.

II

It is clear from the above discussion that bhakti is directed to a certain concrete form of God—a personalised God. At this stage it would be worthwhile to define the philosophy of Tulasîdāsa in order to have a clearer understanding of his conception of Bhakti. It is all the more necessary because there are sharp differences of opinion about it. Tulasîdāsa was, no doubt, a Vaiṣṇava but there are different schools of Vaiṣṇavism and it is to be ascertained which school he actually belonged to. There are some statements in the *Mānasa* on the basis of which it has been claimed that he was a Vishiṣṭādvaitin, i.e. a believer in the qualified monism. But to us it seems that on the philosophical plane he was really an advaitin, a monist, but in practice he followed the path of devotion. It is wrong to think that path of devotion does not fit into the pattern of non-dualistic philosophy just as it is wrong to suppose that the worship of Rāma cannot go with the worship of Shiva.

We shall first prove that he was an advaitin and then show that there is no conflict between devotion and monism.

Tulasîdāsa says that the jîva is an *ansha* or a part of God (Isvara ansa jîva avināsî)[1] and also that jîva canot be like Īshvara

1. P. 449 (here and further page references are from the Kāshirāj edition of Rāmacharitamānasa).

(jîva ki Isa samāna).[1] But this alone cannot establish conclusively that he was a Vishiṣṭādvaitin. There are more plausible considerations against this view. First of all, it should be noted that the term used here is Jîva[2] and not Ātmā, the Advaitin does admit the difference between Jîva and Īshvara but not between Ātmā and Ishvara.[3] Besides, Tulasîdāsa not only uses the rope-snake analogy and the analogy of dream, but he also clearly speaks of the world as false (mṛṣā).[4] He talks of Brahma as *abhēda* or indivisible[5] and speaks of the merger of Ātmā in Brahma.[6] He talks of knowledge as a kind of awakening and of the world as a kind of illusion, adding that suffering cannot be got rid of without awakening.[7] He speaks of māyā as the cause of the universe,[8] and of Brahma as nirguṇa and *nirākāra* or formless.[9]

Thus, Tulasîdāsa believed in non-dual Absolutism, for this concept is not only not inconsistent with bhakti but is even necessary for it. Again and again he emphasises the importance of the name and the form of God.[10] This is possible only if there is a possibility of the nirguṇa and the *nirākāra* Brahma assuming a name and a form. This is tenable only if we accept the doctrine of Māyā. It is through Māyā alone that *Nirguṇa Nirākāra* Brahma can become *Saguṇa Sākāra*[11] without being affected by name and form. But for Māyā, God in the form of a man would become finite. So, to the question as to whether God has form or is formless, the answer given by Tulasîdāsa is

1. P. 446.
2. Jîva is defined by Tulasîdāsa as one who is ignorant, p. 224. Also p. 50.
3. Brahma jîva bicha māyā jaise, pp. 189 and 269.
Also, jimi jîvahiṅ māyā lapatānî, p. 299.
4. Pp. 8, 50, 449.
5. Brahma jō vyāpaka viraja aja akala aniha abhēda, pp. 24 and 179.
6. Jānata tumahiṅ tumahiṅ hōi jāî, p. 191.
7. Jō sapanē sir kāṭai kōî, binu jāgē na dūri dukha hōî, p. 50.
8. Mama māyā sambhava samsārā, p. 433.
9. Māyāchana na dekhiye jaisē nirguna brahma, p. 288.
10. nāma rûpa dui îsa upādhi, p. 11.
11. Māyā manuṣyam Harim, p. 309.
Also, māyā mānuṣa rûpiṇau, p. 293.

that He is both. It may be observed that Judaism and Islam also believe in a formless God, but they do not believe in the doctrine of Māyā. So they think that God with a form would become finite and imperfect. For that reason, they cannot believe in any incarnation of God. There can be only prophets but no incarnations of God. How can God assume a body ? Tulasîdāsa would say that God can assume a body, and yet remain perfect because the body is illusory. Thus, by accepting Māyāvāda, Tulasîdāsa solves the problem of the name and form of God and also the problem of incarnation.

There is thus no difference between the Saguṇa and the Nirguṇa Brahma.[1] Brahma can have any number of forms and can also come down to us as a man. An incarnation is a descent and should not be understood as an elevation of man. As regards the question as to how the Nirguṇa can become Saguṇa, Tulasîdāsa says first of all that it is a mystery[2] not wholly intelligible to our intellect[3]—for Rāma is beyond thought and expression. But, if an incarnation has to be explained, it can be done only in terms of Divine Goodness. The Lord incarnates Himself to establish law and order. But more than that He appears for the sake of His devotees[4] who are able to cross the ocean of the world by singing His glories.

Failure to appreciate the importance of the name and form indicates a failure to understand the psychology of a devotee. Both are necessary for bhakti, but Tulasîdāsa gives greater importance to the name than to the form. He says repeatedly that the name is superior to both Nirguṇa and Saguṇa Brahma because, though both are difficult to understand, the name makes them intelligible as well as accessible to man.[5] The effect of the name is there in all the four yugas, but it is especially so in Kaliyuga wherein there is no other way.[6]

1. Agunahiṅ sagunahiṅ nahiṅ kachhu bhēdā, p. 49.
2. Hari avatāra hētu jehi hōî—idamittham kahi jāta na sōî, p. 51.
3. From the point of view of jnāna, the saguṇa form of God and incarnation are mysteries. But to the bhakta they are intelligible.
4. Bhagata hētu bhagavāna Prabhu, Rāma dharēu tanu bhûpa, p. 427. Also, Rāma bhagata hita nara tanudhārî, p. 12.
5. Aguna saguna bicha nāma susākhî, ubhaya prabōdhaka chatura dubhākhî, p. 12.
6. Kali visēsa nahiṅ āna upāû, p. 12. Also p. 14.

Another interesting observation which Tulasîdāsa makes in this connection is that it is easier to grasp the nirguṇa rûpa but very difficult to know the saguṇa rûpa (nirguna rûpa sulabha ati, saguna jāna nahiṅ kōi).[1] The mind can grasp the idea of a formless infinite like *ākāsha*, but to believe that the infinite can manifest Himself in a finite human form is almost impossible. That is why, when there is an incarnation, very few people and only those to whom the Lord reveals Himself, are able to recognise Him.[2] This is especially because the Lord sometimes appears to behave like one who is ignorant and powerless. That is why Pārvatî, Garuḍa, and Kākabhushunḍi were deluded. Tulasîdāsa makes it clear that the body of Rāma is not a physical body ; it is a body of consciousness and bliss, and it cannot, therefore, be seen by everybody. It is well-known that Lord Krishṇa had to endow Arjuna with a supernatural vision to enable him to see His Vishva Rûpa—the Universal Form. No wonder that Rāvaṇa and others could not believe till the end that Rāma was God Himself.

Tulasîdāsa not only accepts both the forms of God, he also accepts both the forms of spiritual discipline, jnāna and bhakti, saying that there is no difference between the two in so far as both are effective in removing the sufferings of life.[3] And yet there is some difference because of which he prefers bhakti to jnāna. The path of knowledge is very difficult,[4] and it is more so in Kaliyuga when it is almost impossible to have perfect detachment which is absolutely necessary for jnāna. On the other hand, the path of bhakti is easy and pleasant and can also lead to knowledge.[5] Bhakti is also free from the dangers of pride and fall. Tulasîdāsa describes in detail the risks of the path of jnāna and shows in figurative language how bhakti is free from all these. He says that while jnāna, yōga and vairāgya are of manly nature, māyā and bhakti are

1. P. 427.
2. "Sōi jānai jēhi dēhu janāî", p. 191.
3. P. 449.
4. P. 451.
5. P. 274. Also, sugama pantha mōhiṅ pāvaiṅ prānî, p. 274.
Again, Tēhi ādhina jnāna vijnānā, p. 274. Also 416, 404. Uttara Kāṇḍa, pp. 449-51.

womanly. The former require the manly qualities of a strong will, while bhakti means utter dependence and self-surrender which are the qualities of a woman. Since jnāna, yōga and vairāgya are manly qualities and māyā is a woman, there is always the fear of the former being tempted by the latter. But bhakti herself being a woman has no fear from another woman, namely—māyā (mōha na nāri nāri kē rûpā). Moreover, bhakti is the beloved of the Lord while māyā is only a dancing girl, which is the reason why she dare not intrude on the precincts of bhakti.[1]

Bhakti depends on the temperament of the individual too. Some people by nature are more inclined towards bhakti. That is why when Kākabhushunḍi goes to the saint Lōmasha, he frankly says, "Please tell me the path of devotion to the saguṇa form."[2] He confesses that he does not like any instruction about nirguṇa bhakti and insists so much on being initiated into saguṇa bhakti that the saint gets irritated and curses him. In the end, however, the humility of Kāka pleases the saint who gives him lessons in saguṇa bhakti. The fascination for the beloved form of God is so great that the devotee does not want to be united with Brahma. Sutîkshṇa clearly says that he does not want complete freedom from *abhimāna* or ego because he wants to remain the slave of the Lord.[3] Similarly it is said about Sarbhaṅga that he was not merged in God because he had already got the boon to have bhēda-bhakti.[4] All these seem to be temperamental leanings. But it is certain that bhakti is always related to some form. That is why the devotee disregards the path of jnāna and insists on a human form of the Lord.[5]

III

According to Tulasî, bhakti is sui generis ; it is not depen-

1. P. 449.
2. P. 445.
3. P. 271.
4. P. 269.
5. P. 390.

dent on anything, not even on jnāna.[1] Bhakti is its own source and cannot, like love, be explained in terms of anything else. It springs from the heart when it is free from all attachments.[2] Just as vichāra or thought is the quality of the intellect or buddhi, bhakti is the quality of the heart ; but it is not emotionalism or sentimentalism. Certain feelings and emotions no doubt spring from the devotional mood, but bhakti is a permanent attitude : it does not appear and disappear like emotions. The first condition for bhakti is turning one's mind away from the world. The next qualification is the feeling of utter dependence on God.[3] When this is attained, other things follow. The devotee begins to think and talk all the time of the Beloved who is uppermost in his mind. Then, there is the spontaneous feeling of obedience and service to the Lord.[4] The devotee is a dedicated servant of the Lord and that includes service to all the devotees and also to all creatures of God.[5] The bhakta shows respect to all and seeks none for himself.[6] He has complete humility and is free from all pride. The result is that the bhakta has no conflict with anybody.

Bhakti is independent and yet related to jnāna. The relation between the two is complex. At one place Tulasîdāsa says that jnāna is necessary for bhakti : without knowing one cannot believe and without believing one cannot love.[7] At another place he seems to condemn knowledge or jnāna.[8] This apparent conflict can, however, be resolved. If jnāna means mere verbal knowledge and if it gives rise to pride, it is no doubt worthless and should be condemned. But if jnāna confirms and strengthens our faith in God, then, of course, it is

1. Sō sutantra avalamba na ānā
   Tēhi adhîna jnāna vijnānā—Aranya Kāṇḍa.
2. Sabakai mamatā tāga batōrî
   mama pada manahiṅ bāṅdhi bari ḍōrî, p. 328.
3. Mōra dāsa kahāi nara āsā
   Karai to kahahu kāha visvāsā, p. 416.
4. P. 415.
5. P. 293.
6. Sahahiṅ mānaprada āpu amānî, p. 412.
7. P. 464.
8. P. 250.

conducive to bhakti. What Tulasîdāsa wants to emphasise is that bhakti is indispensable in every discipline, whether it is jnāna or yōga, because in the absence of bhakti, one is bound to develop pride or egoism. This is why even liberated souls have an aptitude for bhakti.[1] We may further assert that the liberated one (jîvana-mukta) alone can have real bhakti as they have lost all attachment and can devote themselves to God. But this does not mean that liberation must necessarily precede bhakti. It is possible for a bhakta to have such devotion to God that he does not care even for liberation;[2] for him bhakti is an end in itself.

IV

Tulasîdāsa has enumerated not only the different forms of bhakti but also the different levels of spirituality leading to bhakti. The nine kinds of bhakti propounded by Rāma to Sabarî are well-known. They are :

1. cultivation of the company of sādhûs,
2. deep interest in the lîlā of the Lord,
3. service to the feet of the Guru,
4. singing the glory of the Lord,
5. nāma-japa or repetition of His name and strong faith in the Lord,
6. practice of self-control fostering the spirit of renunciation and craving for virtuous life,
7. to regard the whole world as permeated by God and to respect the saint even more than God,
8. contentment with whatever one gets and not finding fault with others,
9. dependence on the Lord, simplicity, freedom from all wile, no elation and no depression.

Rāma assures Shabarî that even one of these is enough.

Vālmîki in the *Mānasa* describes the various modes of bhakti somewhat differently.[3] A bhakta is one whose ears are like the

1. P. 419.
2. P. 389.
3. P. 191.

ocean to which the lîlā-stories of the Lord rush like rivers, whose eyes are constantly eager to see the Lord, and who always likes to sing the glory of the Lord; a bhakta is one whose nose smells the fragrance of offerings to the Lord and who eats only what has been offered to the Lord; one whose head bows to the Guru and Brāhmaṇa in reverence, who worships the Lord and depends on none else and whose feet take him only to places of pilgrimage; one who repeats the name of the Lord, worships Him along with his whole family, performs sacrifice, feeds the Brāhmaṇas and gives them alms, serves the Guru and regards him greater than the Lord, who wants only love for God in return; one who is free from lust, anger and greed, infatuation, pride and conceit etc.; one who is dear to all and does good to all, regards pleasure and pain, praise and abuse alike, says only what is pleasant and true, and always takes shelter under the Lord; one who regards all women as mothers, others' property as poison, feels happy to see others prosperous and unhappy to see them in trouble, and who loves the Lord as his very life; one who regards the Lord as his master, friend, father, mother and preceptor; one who adopts virtues and rejects vices, suffers for the sake of the cow and the Brāhmaṇa and whose mind has assimilated the principles of *dharma*; one who regards virtues as emanating from the Lord, and vices as emanating from himself, who depends wholly on God and who loves the devotees of the Lord; one who gives up the pride of caste, social position, property, religion, family etc. and cherishes the Lord in his heart; one who regards hell, heaven and salvation alike because he sees the Lord everywhere and obeys Him; one who wants nothing from the Lord and has genuine love for him.

In Uttara-kāṇḍa Kākabhushuṇḍi spells out different stages which one has to pass through before reaching the level of bhakti. Out of thousands, only one leads his life according to dharma, out of millions of the followers of dharma, just one develops the spirit of renunciation, out of millions who have attained the state of renunciation, just one is able to attain real knowledge, out of millions of jnānîs just one becomes a vijnānî. But even rarer than the vijnānî is the bhakta who is wholly devoted to the Lord. This passage shows how rare bhakti is.

The stages mentioned above have been enumerated by the Lord Himself on different occasions. The whole universe is created by the Lord and is dear to Him, and out of the whole creation man is particularly dear to Him; out of men Brāhmaṇas; out of Brāhmaṇas the scholars of Vēdas, those who live according to the edicts of Vēdas; out of those who live according to the edicts of Vēdas, those who have developed the spirit of detachment; out of the detached those who are jnānîs; out of the jnānîs those who are vijnānîs and even more than the vijnānîs the Lord loves those who depend wholly on Him and serve Him whole-heartedly. Even Brahmā is not dear to Him if he is without bhakti, but a man of a lower order is dear to him if he is devoted to Him. The Lord illustrates His point. A father has many sons; one may be a scholar, the other an ascetic, another a jnānî, still another a rich man, and so on. The father loves them all; but if there is one who obeys and serves him, the father loves him best. Similarly though all the creatures are dear to the Lord, He loves those who serve Him most.

Bhakti is indeed a rare thing;[1] it is really a gift from God, but if there is some initial inclination there are ways of developing it. The most important thing is the company of the sages, and that is available to man by the grace of God.[2] Except by the company of the sages, there is no other way of realising the misery of worldly life, of appreciating the difference between the permanent and the transient and the need of bhakti. The company of the wise inspires faith and removes doubts. There is one thing more which seems to be Tulasîdāsa's specific contribution—not emphasised by other saints, and that is the worship of Lord Shiva. Rāmachandra Himself says that without the worship of Shiva, one cannot cultivate His bhakti.[3] In this way the poet resolved the conflict between the Shaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas. Probably for this reason, in North India the conflict never assumed such proportions as it did in the South. It should not be imagined that Tulasî regarded Shiva as inferior to Rāma. The relation between Rāma and

1. P. 301.
2. P. 3.
3. P. 416.

Shiva is very peculiar. Rāma worships Shiva and Shiva worships Rāma. Gōswāmîjî says that Shiva is at once the servant, the friend and the Lord of Rāma.[1] It only means that the two are one with different forms, this is possible only in Māyāvāda.

In Araṇya Kāṇḍa, Rāmachandra Himself explains to Lakshmaṇa the ways and means of bhakti.[2] First of all, there should be reverence for the Brāhmaṇas. A Brāhmaṇa is to be worshipped even if he curses and is completely destitute of virtue. Secondly, everyone should do his own duties as prescribed by the Shāstras, all this for the development of the spirit of detachment leading to love for the Lord and His commandments. Then different forms of bhakti get rooted in his heart, the devotee develops love for the saints and regards the Lord as all-in-all, sings His glories and becomes free from lust, anger, etc.

So far as the poet himself is concerned, he seems to consider nāma-japa, i.e. repetition of name, to be the best means of bhakti. He has devoted many pages in Bāla-kāṇḍa to explain the importance of Nāma—name, specially of the name of Rāma.[3] Firstly because the name and the named are one,[4] secondly because it is the name which makes the named intelligible and is, therefore, even superior to rûpa—form.[5] The name is superior even to Rāma.[6] It is the mediator between the abstract Absolute and the Personified Absolute.[7] Through nāma-japa Hanumān was able to have a control over Rāma.[8] In Kaliyuga especially, nāma-japa is most effective. The name of Rāma is effective whether it is uttered with love or with spite, in anger or even in moments of boredom and laziness.[9] The importance of name is so great that even Rāma cannot describe it fully.

When the climax of bhakti is reached, the devotee leaves

1. P. 9.
2. P. 274.
3. Rāma sakala nāmana tē adhikā, p. 289.
4. P. 11.
5. P. 12.
6. P. 12.
7. P. 12.
8. P. 13.
9. P. 14.

everything to God, does not ask for anything, and accepts only that which the Lord considers best for him.[1] When the Lord is pleased to appear before the devotee, He offers to grant him whatever he wants and does not impose His will on him. This is because He wants that the devotee should first be free from all desires and then be granted bhakti. When the bhakta has no personal desires, he begs only bhakti of the Lord. There is an interesting anecdote regarding Kākabhushuṇḍi. When the Lord appeared before him, He offered him all supernatural powers, knowledge, reason, special enlightenment—whatever he wanted. Then Kākabhushuṇḍi began to reflect that the Lord had offered to grant him everything except Bhakti.[2] So he said, "O Lord, if you are pleased, grant me pure and deep-rooted bhakti." Hearing this, the Lord granted him pure bhakti and complimented him saying, "Kāka, you are naturally clever. Why should you not ask for such a boon ? There is none more fortunate than you, as you have asked for bhakti which is the source of all happiness. The bhakta is dear to me indeed.... No one is as dear to me as my devotee !"

What does the Lord mean by saying that though all are dear to Him, he is especially fond of the Bhakta. The point is that the Lord helps all the creatures to attain the supreme goal of life, but it is ordinarily through the operation of the law of Karma—Action.[3] This is the normal way. The Lord has established the law of Karma so that the jîvas may liquidate the impressions of their past deeds and eventually turn to him. But this process works only if the jîva does not acquire new karmas in the process of liquidation. The addition of new karmas to the old stock can be checked only if one performs deeds not for the sake of gratifying one's personal desires but either as a matter of duty or as service to the Lord. In either case, the action is free from personal desire. When the jîva acts in the above way, the past stock is exhausted in due course and the jîva reaches the goal. Another thing that happens in the course of liquidating the past karma is that the jîvas have to face sufferings and frustrations and are thus compelled to look

1. P. 272.
2. P. 432.
3. Ayōdhyā Kāṇḍa, p. 224.

up to the Higher Power for help. Suffering in life seems to have a double significance. Firstly, the jîva realises that suffering is due to vicious deeds done for gratifying one's desires. Secondly, due to sufferings and frustrations, the jîva is compelled to look up to the Lord. But for sufferings, one could neither realise that sinful deeds must be avoided nor could one turn one's mind to God. The law of Karma is, therefore, not a punitive measure adopted by the Lord; it is, instead, an expression of his grace. It has a spiritual significance and has to be accepted as a gift from God whether the fruits of our actions are pleasant or unpleasant. When the jîva is able to develop this attitude, the Lord is pleased and shower His grace on the jîva.

There is another direct form of the grace of the Lord. There are two stages in the evolution of bhakti. The first stage is when the devoted jîva becomes dear to the Lord.[1] When this happens, the Lord begins to take direct interest in the bhakta, never leaving him merely to the operation of the law of Karma. He begins to intervene directly and even sets aside the law of Karma for the speedy redemption of the devotee. This is how the bhakta is especially dear to him. There is no fear of fall when the Lord takes him up in His lap.

Another question that arises is—what happens after the attainment of bhakti ? In other words, is bhakti an end in itself or is it a means to some other end ? As is well known, bhakti is sometimes said to be a means to jnāna—enlightenment. The Lord Himself says, "The effect of my *darshana* is unique indeed, as the jîva is able to regain his real nature.[2] Elsewhere it has been said that when the jîva turns his face to the Lord, his sins of the millions of past births are destroyed.[3] All this shows as if bhakti is a means. But there is a different kind of Bhakti which is an end in itself—sādhya-bhakti.[4] Our submission in this connection is that this kind of bhakti is attained either

1. It is said of Bharata : Jaga japa Rāma, Rāma japa jēhî. (Ay. Kāṇḍa, p.223).
2. P. 286.
3. P. 237.
4. Sagunōpāsaka mōccha na lēhiṅ, 389.

when the bhakta is a liberated soul or when bhakti springs up directly in his heart. Here the bhakta is either liberated or perfectly united with the Lord. At this stage, the bhakta is dear to the Lord as the Lord is dear to him. Thus, there is a kind of advaita—an identification achieved in bhakti also. This is the advaita of the will and not of being, as it is in Shankara's philosophy. Bhakti requires complete merger of one's will in the will of the Lord. When this kind of identification of will takes place, a wonderful change in the attitude of the bhakta comes about; he is able to regard the whole world as auspicious. There is no evil seen then; everything is good. This kind of advaita can be realised only in the bhakti mārga. Here the world is not false, but only the evil in it. It does not mean that there is no pain or suffering in the world. What is meant is that behind all this, one sees the will of the Lord, and everything which leads to spiritual uplift becomes auspicious. This is another way of rising above the concept of the good and the evil, pleasure and pain—when the devotee is conscious of a higher beatitude permeating the whole universe. This complete acceptance and the spiritual peace resulting from it is not possible by means of knowledge. In bhakti alone, the whole world is accepted as a manifestation of the will of the Lord. It is for this reason that Tulasîdāsa exhorts us to adopt the attitude of a devotee—of one who has merged his own will in the will of the Lord. This is for him the best relationship with the Lord.[1]

1. Sēvaka-sēvya bhāva binu bhava na tariya uragāri, p. 451.

9

Ethics of Tulasîdāsa

DR. RĀMDATT BHĀRDWĀJ

Tulasîdāsa traces the origin of morality to māyā, the Cosmic Illusion. God is quite free to act, but not the individual, whose course of action is predetermined by the Divine Will which generates the Law of Action (*Karma*). It is action or *karma* which leads to a series of sufferings and transmigrations. Since the individual has been endowed with free will he is supposed to be responsible for his actions. Good actions tend to happiness. The *summum bonum*, whether it is salvation or fellowship or freedom from rebirths, ultimately depends on the Will Divine. God's grace is easy to obtain through the repetition of the divine name, Rāma.

According to the Law of *Karma*, as one sows so one reaps. The law is universal, having no exceptions. To ward off the evil effects of an action, some pacificatory rites are recommended; but it is not necessary that an evil must always be quelled by a good.

Individual ethics

Tulaṣîdāsa states clearly that the individual is free to act. Lakshmaṇa advises Rāma that it is cowardice to act still and pray to Fortune for help and so it would be proper to give vent

to indignation and dry up the Indian Ocean.[1] Lakshmaṇa tells Guha that no man is the cause of another's joy or sorrow and that all is the fruit of one's own action. This is because union and separation, pleasure, good, evil, friendship, enmity and neutrality are phenomenal. Similarly birth, death, prosperity, adversity, time, action, earth, home, wealth, city, family, heaven, hell and all the entanglements of the world are phenomenal.[2] This amounts to saying that as one reaps so one sows.[3] Rāma and Guha had no rival views to offer, which means that Tulasîdāsa agrees with the views of Lakshmaṇa.

The Divine Will

Tulasîdāsa postulates that the Divine Will is the ultimate cause of an action. He speaks of fate and fatalism and employs the words *daiva* and *vidhi* to denote destiny.[4]

Some examples of the Will

Lord Shiva tells Pārvatî that whatever God has ordained will come to pass.[5] She also consoles her mother, saying that God's plans are unalterable and that what the Creator writes cannot be blotted.[6] The Lord also tells his spouse that there is none wise or foolish, man being ever such as God will have him to be.[7] When Rāma advises Sumantra to return to Ayōdhyā, Sumantra says that the ways of Fate are uneven and beyond control.[8] The mothers of Rāma meet Sîtā at Chitrakûṭa remarking that one has to bear all that Fate (Daiva) puts upon one.[9] There in the assembly of mothers, sages, Sîtā, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, Bharata observes that all owe their birth to their parents ; but their good or ill fortune is the gift of God.[10]

1. *R.*, 5.50.3-4.
2. *R.*, 2.91.4-8.
3. *R.*, 2.15.5.
4. *R.*, 1.221.7, 1.245.5, 1.251.4.
5. *R.*, 1.51.7.
6. *R.*, 1.96.6 and 8.
7. *R.*, 1.124.
8. *R.*, 1.198.7.
9. *R.*, 2.245.6
10. *R.*, 2.254.6.

God makes us all dance

Man is a puppet in the hands of God and dances like a monkey at His Will.[1] This is what Lord Shiva reveals to Pārvatî. Kāka also tells Garuḍa that Rāma is the juggler who makes us all dance like monkeys.[2] These observations are in tune with those of the Gîtā which states that God dwells in the hearts of all beings and with His Māyā makes them spin about as though set upon a whirligig (18.61).

Is Fate universal, inscrutable and unalterable ?

Thus Fate seems to govern all. There may, however, be a few exceptions. Whatever the course of Fate, Vashiṣṭha, in the opinion of Bharata, could bypass it,[3] that is, none could alter what he chose to decide. Fate, however, is inscrutable and unalterable. Tulasîdāsa observes that circumstances conspire as Fate would have them and that it may not come itself but it can carry one off to the place of occurrence.[4] When King Pratāpabhānu, for example, could not understand the ways of the so-called hermit King and suffered consequently, the Brāhmaṇas who had cursed him, later remark that Fate cannot be effaced or altered.[5] Yājnavalkya tells Bharadvāja that for him who incurs the displeasure of Fate a grain of dust becomes a mountain, and a father an angel of death.[6] When Bharata returned from visit to his maternal uncle and was grieved to learn the affairs prevailing at Ayōdhyā in his absence, Kaushalyā consoled him saying that course of time and fate is unalterable, hence no body is to blame.[7] Similarly, of the sages Vashiṣṭha and Bharadvāja, the one consoles him saying that Fate is over-strong and that loss and gain, life and death, honour and dishonour are in God's hands;[8] and the other says Fate's doings are beyond human power.[9]

1. *R.*, 4.10.7.
2. *R.*, 4.6.24.
3. *R.*, 2.254.8.
4. *R.*, 1.159.
5. *R.*, 1.174.
6. *R.*, 1.175.
7. *R.*, 2.164.6-7.
8. *R.*, 2.171.
9. *R.*, 2.205.8.

Prediction is generally regarded as an evidence of fatalism and it may assume several such forms as physical smarting, dreams, portents, omens, astrological readings, clairvoyance of sages ; and Tulasîdāsa has given instances of all such predictions.

Is Tulasîdāsa a fatalist ?

In his opinion God alone is free, the individual is under His subjection.[1] Nevertheless he makes a few observations which seem to suggest the freedom of will to act.[2] The analogy of the parrot and the monkey also indicates that the soul is free and pure ; but when it once gets involved in the meshes of his actions he becomes a slave, as it were, to fate. God's delusive power begins and His grace ends the worldly fetters.[3]

Responsibility

Tulasîdāsa believes that the very initial urge is the Divine Will and the final agency of salvation is the Divine grace ; so there is little room for moral responsibility from the noumenal point of view. Phenomenally, however, it is not God but the individual who is to blame for moral lapses. That is because he has been endowed with a body and also with a capacity to discern.[4] But it is a paradox that Tulasîdāsa speaks of vicarious suffering also which negates moral responsibility : why should one commit an offence and another get punishment ?[5] It is queer[6] that the emotions of anger, lust and greed which are innate in man should impel him against his wishes to traverse a wrong path and expose him to punishment.[7]

Theistic religions regard God as the embodiment of goodness ; so they cannot logically impute sin or evil to Him. Hence arose the conception of māyā, the great Illusion, to explain

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 119, 149, 155.
2. *R.*, 5.50.4, 2.91.4.
3. *R.*, 4.2.2.
4. *Vinayapatrikā*, 114.
5. *Dōhāvalî*, 242.
6. *Ibid.*, 241.
7. *Vinayapatrikā*, 147.

away and harmonise such pair of opposites as pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, good and evil.

Source of virtues and vices

It is māyā that has created all virtues and vices. Such vices as intoxication, lust, errors of judgement permeate through the whole world.[1] Rāma tells Bharata that merit and demerit are all products of māyā, and that the greatest merit is to notice neither, because it is imperfection of knowledge to do so.[2]

The direct source

Thus māyā is the direct source of both good and evil but it subsists in Brahman. Brahman, therefore, is the indirect but ultimate source of all that is right or wrong. Evidently, however, the source of good and evil may be located in the individual's limitations. So Tulasîdāsa observes that the Creator's universe consists of things animate and inanimate, good and evil. A saint, like a swan, extracts the milk of goodness, leaving behind the water of no worth.[3] The Creator gives men the faculty of discernment, owing to which they give up error and love truth. But affected by time, temperament and fate, even good men, being human beings, are liable to deviate from virtue. God, however, corrects them and takes away all their sin and sorrow and glorifies them.[4]

Virtues and vices are thus the creation of māyā. Within the domain of phenomenon (vyavahāra) they are distinguished as such, but not within the realm of noumenon (paramārtha). This view finds the support of the upaniṣads, such as the Chhāndōgya (7.2.1), the Brhadāraṇyaka (4.3.15-17), the Kauṣîta (3.8), the Kaṭha (2.14). The Yajurvēda (40.8) holds that the self is bright, pure and unperceived by evil (apāpaviddham).

Nature of good and evil

King Dasharatha declared to his queen Kaikēyî that truth

1. *R.*, 7.56.1-2.
2. *R.*, 7.41.
3. *R.*, 1.11.3, 1.12.
4. *R.*, 1.6.1-4.

is the foundation of all merit and virtue.[1] Rāma also tells Sumantra that there is no virtue equal to truth.[2] It was an immemorial rule in his family that one rather lost one's life than broke a promise ;[3] and disgrace to a man of honour is pain, as grievous as a million deaths.[4]

Rāma tells Bharata that men commit sins of various description because of their infatuated selfishness, there being no virtue like charity and no meanness like malevolence. Those that cause suffering to others undergo innumerable rebirths and spoil their prospects for the next world.[5] Tulasîdāsa speaks like a pragmatist when he thinks that it is value that measures goodness. For example, the tooth of a jaw is prized ; but it is thrown away as it comes out of the mouth.[6]

Metaphysically speaking, therefore, māyā is the origin of both good and evil ; but ethically speaking, evil is born of selfishness ; and good, of truth or benevolence. Tulsîdāsa, it appears, is definite with regard to the origin of evil ; but he wavers between truth and benevolence as the foundation of goodness. Of these two he would choose altruism or benevolence. Truth seems to be on the border-line of metaphysics and ethics, whereas benevolence is strictly within the realm of morals. So it would be correct to assert that Tulasîdāsa defines virtue as benevolence and vice as malevolence.[7] Practice of benevolence in thought, word and deed is good, and egoism is evil. It is safer in self-interest to practise benevolence[8], which helps one cross the ocean of the world.[9]

Cardinal virtues

Tulasîdāsa mentions the following virtues which are cardinal : prayer, penance, sacrifice, sobriety, self-control, charity,

1. *R.*, 2.27.6.
2. *R.*, 2.94.5.
3. *R.*, 2.27.4.
4. *R.*, 2.94.7.
5. *R.*, 7.40.1 and 7.40.3.
6. *Dōhāvalî*, 330.
7. *R.*, 7.40.1.
8. *D.*, 467.
9. *Vinayapatrikā*, 186.

chastity, meditation, wisdom,[1] kindness, mercy,[2] control of the senses and mind, simplicity, pilgrimage,[3] non-violence,[4] and worship at the feet of the Brāhmaṇas.[5] These virtues merge in devotion to Rāma and Viṣṇu through the recitation of the merits and names.[6]

Leading vices

Ignorance, back-biting, injury to others, selfishness, and hostility against Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Shiva are the leading vices. There is no evil greater than ignorance (tamasa) and back-biting (pishunatā).[7] There are two categories of commission and omission. Back-biting falls under the first, ignorance under the second. There is no sin comparable to back-biting; [8] and he that indulges in it can never prosper.[9] Hostility against God is a sin which exists on the border-line of ethics and religion. Those who give ear to the abuse of Viṣṇu and Shiva are sinful.[10] Besides these there are other kinds of crimes such as incendiarism, slaughter of a cow, murder of a child, woman, friend, parents, king, preceptor, Brāhmaṇa, etc.[11] But morally speaking, injury to others is a sin which has no equal[12], the motive power of which is selfishness which gives rise to infatuation and thus mars future prospects.[13]

Virtue is difficult to practise

It is very easy to talk of virtue, not so to practise it. Many are they, says Tulasîdāsa, who are adept in tendering advice to others but few act according to what they advise.[14] Rāvaṇa,

1. *R.*, 7.94 5.
2. *R.*, 7.111.10.
3. *Kavitāvalî*, 7.144.
4. *R.*, 7.120.22.
5. *R.*, 7.44.7-8.
6. *R.*, 7.41-8.
7. *R.*, 7.111.10.
8. *R.*, 7.120.22.
9. *R.*, 7.111.5.
10. *R.*, 6.2.
11. *R.*, 2.166.5-6.
12. *R.*, 7.40.1.
13. *R.*, 7.40.4.
14. *R.*, 1.6.9.

for instance, gave sermons to his wives and subordinates but took none to heart.

Good company

Good company is a great gain, but bad company is a great loss. For example, the dust flies heavenwards when it keeps company with the wind; but it becomes mud and sinks when it comes in contact with water.[1] To quote another example, a *mainā* learns either to repeat a divine name or a word of abuse, according to the character of the house in which it receives its training.[2] Again, soot is thrown away by an ignorant person, but it is turned into ink for copying scriptures by a scholar.[3] The planets, medicines, water, air, clothes all are good or bad according to the person who makes use of them.[4]

Without good company, no delusion can be overcome; for in bad company there is no talk of Rāma.[5] Communion with saints is a pearless blessing which ultimately leads to final bliss.[6] Tulasîdāsa's advice, therefore, is that lust and intoxication should be discarded, Rāma should be worshipped and communion with the saints should be held.[7]

Is punishment necessary ?

A vice or sin should not be overlooked or brooked. A vicious and sinful person must be punished. Mere sermons do not suffice. One may go on watering a plantain with effort; but it will not bear fruit until it is trimmed. Similarly, a mean fellow does not mind prayers or compliments, but needs rough handling.[8] Rāma's observation in this connection is thus : "There is no love without fear. To use entreaties to a churl, to lavish affection upon a rogue, to deal liberally with a born miser, to discourse on divine wisdom with a self-centred person, to speak of detachment from the world to the covetous, to tell of

1. *R.*, 1.6.9.
2. *R.*, 1.6.10.
3. *R.*, 1.6.11.
4. *R.*, 1.7.
5. *R.*, 7.60.4.
6. *R.*, 7.61.
7. *R.*, 7.125 (kh), 7.32.8, 7.56.
8. *R.*, 5.58.

God to a man under the influence of passion or lust, is all the same as sowing the sand in the hope of a harvest.[1]

Thus it seems that, metaphysically speaking, there is no good better than truth (satya), and, ethically speaking, there is no good like benevolence. Non-violence (Ahimsā) is the negative form of its positive counterpart, namely, benevolence. Similarly, in its metaphysical aspect vice is untruth (asatya) and in its ethical aspect it is injury or para-pîḍana. Tulasîdāsa recommends the Shiva-mārga or the path of righteousness for all those who are earnest devotees, the path which he details in his *Vinayapatrikā*.[2]

Social ethics : Varṇāshrama

Tulasîdāsa believes in varṇāshrama, that is, the duties pertaining to the caste (varṇa) and stage (āshrama) of life. His advocacy in this regard is in conformity with the scriptures, such as the Ṛgvēda (10.99.12), the Manusmṛti (1.87), the Gîtā (3.5; 3.35; 4.13). He is quite orthodox; for although he recognises the value of environment and knows that some acquired traits are not inherited, yet he gives much weight to heredity. He recommends through the lips of Lord Rāma that a Brāhmaṇa should be reverenced even though he be without virtue and character.[3]

Tulasîdāsa set forth the ideals of the relations of husband and wife, father and son, preceptor and disciple, master and servant, king and subjects, while delineating the character of Dasharatha and Kaushalyā, Rāma and Sîtā, Dasharatha and Rāma, Vishvāmitra and Rāma, Vashiṣṭha and Rāma, Rāma and Hanumān, Rāma and Aṅgada, Rāma and Sugrîva, Rāma and Bharata, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, Rāma and his subjects.

In addition to the special duties pertaining to such relations, Tulasîdāsa has treated, though in different contexts, of the duties of a universal nature such as those the *Manusmṛti* (1.32) has dealt with. He has written on the duties of a woman, king, minister which need some elaboration.

1. *R.*, 5.57, 5.57.2-4.
2. *Vinayapatrikā*, 205.
3. *R.*, 3.33.2 and *Dōhāvalî*, 368, 358-59.

The main duty of a woman is to worship her lord. Mainā advises her daughter Pārvatî to be obedient to her spouse, Shiva.[1] Anasûyā, the wife of Sage Atri, tells Sîtā that mother, father, brethren and friends are all good in a limited degree; but a husband is an unlimited blessing; and that vile is the woman who worships him not. Courage, virtue, a friend and a woman are four things which are tried in times of adversity. Her one duty, she adds, her fast and penance consist in devotion to her husband in thought, word and deed.[2] Anasûyā is confident that a woman attains salvation if she adheres to her duty faithfully.[3] Rāma told Sîtā, on his departure from Ayōdhyā to the forest, that there is no other duty so paramount as reverential submission to the husband's parents.[4]

Classification of women

Anasûyā mentions a fourfold classification of women. The best woman does not even dream of any living man other than her husband. The next best regards another's husband as her own brother, father or son. The woman who controls herself by her sense of devotion as a part of her duty and consideration for her family is said to be of a lower character. But the lowest one is she who restrains herself either by fear or by want of opportunity. The woman who deceives her husband and enjoys momentary pleasure goes to hell and endures torments for a hundred million lives.[5]

Political ethics : A king's duties

The relation of a king and his subjects is also a form of special duty (visheṣa dharma). Tulasîdāsa recommends a few maxims to a ruler. A king should never disregard polity. Before leaving Ayōdhyā for exile, Rāma left a message for Bharata, desiring him to cherish the subjects in word, thought and deed, and never to forget polity.[6] Tulasîdāsa observes that a powerful

1. *R.*, 1.101.3.
2. *R.*, 3.4.5.10.
3. *R.*, 3.4.18.
4. *R.*, 2.60.5.
5. *R.*, 3.4.11-17.
6. *R.*, 2.151.3-4.

foe, even though he be alone, is not to be lightly regarded.[1]

A king should carefully guard against the intoxication of power (rāja-mada). A worldly man who has got power becomes infatuated and so betrays himself. To quote a few examples, the moon-god debauched his guru's wife; Nahuṣa mounted a palanquin borne by the sages; and Vēna defied established usage. Similarly Indra, Trishanku and Sahashrabāhu all had to meet disgrace, intoxicated as they were with royal power.[2]

As a king so his subjects, is an Indian maxim—*Yathā rājā tathā prajā*. It is, therefore, very essential for a good government to have a capable king who should be wise, virtuous, strong and thoughtful. The sun realises vapour from the oceans and then after a time distributes it as rain all over the earth; just so does a king realise taxes from his subjects only to give them back in a different form subsequently.[3] A king is expected to maintain a firm policy. For it is his laws that contribute to public welfare and deter people from deviating from the right path.[4] Moreover, he should keep watch over his officials. For even good ones, finding an opportunity, misbehave, turn away from him and consequently do him harm. They are worse tyrants than their master. For if the king misbehaves in one way, they misbehave in three ways—they ill-treat good people, deal partially, and manoeuvre sabotage.[5]

General ethics

Tulasîdāsa has, besides, given some general rules of conduct. A person should not be foolhardy. He should take legitimate precautions. It is not good to offend nine persons—an armed man, an accomplice, a king, an unprincipled man, a rich person, a physician, a panegyrist, a poet, and a cook.[6] As a matter of caution, the scriptures, however well-studied, must be read again and again, and a king, however well-served, is

1. *R.*, 1.170.
2. *R.*, 2.227.1, 2.227.8, 2.228.1, 2.228, 2.230.6-7.
3. *Dōhāvalî*, 509, 508.
4. *Dōhāvalî*, 506.
5. *Dōhāvalî*, 499-501.
6. *R.*, 3.25.3-4.

never to be depended upon.[1] It should be remembered that when these three—a minister, a physician, and a spiritual adviser—use fair words, either from fear or from hope of reward, then dominion, religion and health get quickly destroyed.[2] Another's wife should not be coveted. Vibhîṣaṇa advised Rāvaṇa to turn away from another's wife as from the moon on its fourth day of the bright half of Bhādrapada month.[3] As a precautionary measure, one should not disclose one's own name to a stranger, otherwise one has to repent of it sometimes.[4]

The conclusion

Tulasîdāsa traces the direct origin of morality to māyā, the Cosmic Illusion, and its indirect origin to Brahman, the ultimate Reality, Māyā subsisting on Brahman. God is free to act as He chooses but the individual is bound like a caged parrot or a roped monkey. The individual's course is predestined by Divine Will, which can be glimpsed, but slightly only, through astrological calculations, physiognomical readings or ominous divinations. The Divine Will, in its phenomenal aspect, is the Law of Action (Karma), which leads to a series of sufferings and transmigrations. The individual is endowed with the faculty of discrimination; he must, therefore, be held responsible, although there is possibility of vicarious responsibility also. Good actions tend to happy results; so they are recommended. For the effective regulation of good conduct the company of saints and holy persons is advisable. The *summum bonum* is Kaivalya or fellowship (with God); at any rate cessation of sufferings and transmigrations depends finally on the grace of God, which can be obtained easily and more effectively by the repetition of the divine name, Rāma.

The Law of Karma is immutable and applicable to all without exception. Accordingly, as one sows so one reaps. To quell or neutralise an evil, pacificatory rites should be performed, although it is not necessary that by doing good, evil must

1. *R.*, 3.36.8-9.
2. *R.*, 5.37.
3. *R.*, 5.37.5-6.
4. *R.*, 1.159.4-5.

subside. In spite of meditations, pilgrimages, penances and other good actions, the evil may continue cropping up like the demon Raktabîja. The only penance, therefore, is divine grace.[1]

Metaphysically speaking, goodness is nothing but truth (*satya*) and badness nothing but falsehood (*asatya*). Ethically considered, goodness is benevolence (*parahita*) and badness is injury to others (*para-pîḍana*).[2] One should mind one's own station in life (*varṇāshrama*) and eschew Kāma or the lusty tangles of a woman which obstruct Shiva-mārga or the path of righteousness.[3]

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 128.
2. *Vinayapatrikā*, 141; *R.*, 7.40.1, 7.40.3.
3. *Vinayapatrikā*, 205.

10

Cultural Values in Tulasîdāsa

PROF. N. K. DEVARĀJA

Tulasîdāsa is one of the major poets of India. He occupies the same place in medieval Hindi literature as Kālidāsa does in Sanskrit literature. This is not to say that Tulasîdāsa is the greatest poet of medieval Hindi; probably both in point of intensity of experience and in analytic subtlety of expression, Sûradāsa excels the author of the *Rāmacharitamānasa.* Even so, Kālidāsa, too, cannot claim to be the greatest poet of Sanskrit literature. The authors of the two great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* indeed, seem to tower above all other writers in Sanskrit, not excluding Kālidāsa. However, Kālidāsa reflects in its totality the developed, refined culture of Indian elite realised in the Golden Age of the Guptas better than any other writer in Sanskrit. For this reason Kālidāsa may be called a national poet *par excellence.* That poet excels all other Sanskrit poets except Vālmîki, in depicting nature; he is also a dependable spokesman of the moral and religious consciousness of his age. A similar claim can be made for Tulasîdāsa vis-a-vis medieval India.

Medieval poetry, particularly in its earlier phases, centres around the two most popular incarnations of Viṣṇu, Rāma and Krishṇa. These two divinities of Indian religion and mythology stand almost diametrically opposed in temperament and

character. While Rāma is the prototype of the ideal, law-abiding person whose conduct as a son, brother, husband and king sets the highest standards of nobility and goodness, Lord Krishṇa represents the wayward genius swayed by passionate zeal for music and love and religio-metaphysical quest on the one hand and for defending the righteous and punish the evil-doers on the other. Tulasîdāsa's genius found itself in consonance with the life and character of Rāma. All through his life, employing different metrical forms and using now Avadhî—the language in which he wrote his *magnum opus,* the *Rāmacharitamānasa*—and now Brajabhāṣa as the medium of expression, he wrote poetry only on one single theme, i.e. the life and character of Rāma. As a consequence, in its ethical aspects his writings uniformly emphasise the virtues that make for orderliness and discipline in life, individual and social.

The proper subject-matter of literature including poetry is the effective and moral relationships among human beings, e.g. the relationship between lovers, between parents and their progeny, among brothers, between householders and holy men, between friends and enemies, between king and his subjects and so on. In Tulasîdāsa's writings a yet another relationship, that between God and his devotees, assumes the highest importance. Accepting the ideal of the joint family as the unit of social organisation, Tulasîdāsa presented idealised pictures of relations among the family members. Nor did he question the validity and importance of the Caste or Varṇa system. He also accepted the custom and convention that the wife should be ever obedient to her husband. The *Raghuvamsha* of Kālidāsa is also concerned to depict the lives of the ideal descendants of Raghu, an ideal ruler and a great warrior. But, on the whole, Kālidāsa is more realistic in portraying human nature than Tulasîdāsa. Thus, that poet has depicted king Aja both as a warrior and as a lover. Not inhibited by any extra-regard for Dasharatha (who, for Tulasîdāsa, is an object of reverence being the father of God incarnate) Kālidāsa feels free to delineate his character as a lover, as a conquerer and as one fond of game-hunting. Incidentally, another difference between Kālidāsa and Tulasîdāsa as spokesmen of Indian culture may be noticed here. Kālidāsa is better acquainted with the manners as well as the splendour

associated with courtly life. He is also more conversant with the fundamentals of diplomatic behaviour. It must be admitted, though, that Tulasîdāsa has successfully portrayed the character of Mantharā, the devoted maid-servant of Kaikēyî, who manoeuvres the queen into bargaining for Rāma's exile. The most important difference between Kālidāsa and Tulasîdāsa probably consists in this, that while the latter has a more thorough awareness of the religious temper, the former excels in representing those moral qualities in his heroes that make them effective rulers as well as wise enjoyers of the blessings of life.

A third difference between Kālidāsa and Tulasîdāsa flows, at least partly, from their use of Sanskrit and vernaculars as the media of expression. Kālidāsa wrote in Sanskrit which had been serving as the language of the aristocracy. Tulasîdāsa's adoption of the people's languages for his works tended—despite the fact that he, too, wrote about royal personages—to democratise his sensibility and expression. This also contributed to the widening of the range of poetic expression. Thus Tulasî has depicted at length the playful behaviour of Rāma as a child and the delight that behaviour caused to his parents. Sûradāsa, another great poet of the times, excels not only Tulasîdāsa but probably all the poets in world literature, in portraying the sportive demeanor and frolicsome mischiefs of the divine child Krishṇa. No Sanskrit poet, not even Vālmîki, showed comparable interest in the life of a child. While such heroes of Kālidāsa as king Dilîpa show interest in village life as an act of indulgence on the part of superiors towards those inferior in status, Sûra and Tulasî seem to feel innate sympathy for the village people whose life they depict from within. Tulasîdāsa, who describes the splendours of Ayōdhyā in his *Mānasa* much in the same vein as Vālmîki has done it in his *Rāmāyaṇa*, found time to write a small poem (a collection of couplets) describing the ceremony of the paring of nails of the child Rāma. In that poem king Dasharatha is shown taking interested notice of the womenfolk, including those belonging to the lower orders of workers, such as the wives of the family barber, the iron-smith and the gardener participating in the ceremony.

Tulasîdāsa's acceptance of the scheme of the four *Varṇas*

and his repeated eulogy of the Brāhmaṇas coupled with his deprecation of the Shûdras and, occasionally, of womenfolk, are targets of attack by modern progressive readers and critics. But that is hardly fair, since in endorsing the Varṇa system, which now seems to be not only undemocratic but also unhumanistic and even inhuman, Tulasîdāsa was only expressing the socio-ethical values widely accepted in his time. The theorists of literature, ancient and medieval, did not expect the writer to make any innovations in the realm of socio-political or moral thought. The so-called revolutionary writer is a phenomenon peculiar to our own time. While medieval India produced a number of reformers, it did not produce any revolutionary thinker. The most revolutionary teacher and writer of the middle ages was probably Kabîra who, like Buddha long before, questioned and preached against the institution of caste, but without any appreciable success. In his own way, however, Tulasîdāsa himself was a person with generous impulses. As a devotee of Rāma, and also as a believer in the monistic world-view of Vēdānta, he practised lòve and compassion towards all living creatures. While extolling the role of Bhakti in transforming man's life, he underplayed the notion of caste and tried to show by incorporating the incidents of Rāma's contact with Niṣada, the chief of the fishing community who ferried him across the Ganges, and with Shabarî who offered him pretasted plums how loving devotion to Rāma could win His ennobling and sanctifying grace. Indeed, Tulasîdāsa is at his best when recounting the acts of compassion, vis-a-vis the devotees, performed by lord Rāma, the embodiment of kindness and concern for all the living creatures particularly those calling upon Him for protection and succour.

Tulasîdāsa is one of the greatest among poets who popularised and propagated the way of devotion centring round Viṣṇu and even Shiva. Even apart from this he is one of the greatest spokesmen of India's religious culture. That culture lays emphasis on two central virtues of the religious person or the saint, namely, total detachment towards the self and selfish interests, and the attitudes of friendliness and compassion towards all living creatures. In the hands of the poet, Rāma, the son of a Kshatriya king, as also his brother Bharata have become almost

saintly personages. Both are absolutely indifferent to possessing the kingdom of their father. When Kaikēyî, the stepmother of Rāma, made the king Dasharatha agree to send him into exile, Rāma tried to put an agreeable interpretation on the sordid affair. He said : 'My going to the woods will be beneficial to me every way. I shall be able there to come in special contact with the hermits. Add to this the fact that this is my father's order, and has also your approval.' (The idea is that Rāma would be having the additional pleasure of having carried out the order of his father and the wishes of his mother). (Ayōdhyā-Kāṇḍa, Dōhā 41). Rāma's supreme detachment from worldly goods is lauded by the poet in the second verse of the Sanskrit invocation preceding the commencement of the epic story in the kāṇḍa. The verse embodies a characteristic expression of the Indian religious attitude. It runs as follows :

'May he who neither rejoiced when anointed king, nor was saddened by painful exile in the woods; the worthy descendant of Raghu of the lotus face; may he ever vouchsafe to me success and prosperity.'

A gnomic verse in Sanskrit compares great men, who remain the same in adversity as in prosperity, with the sun which is red both when it rises and when it sets. Here it is noteworthy that the quality of detachment attributed to Rāma by Tulasîdāsa was also noticed and celebrated by Kālidāsa who wrote : 'People witnessed with astonishment the sameness of colour on Rāma's face, both when he had put on auspicious robes (for the anticipated moment of being anointed king) and when he put on bark clothing (for going to the woods in exile) (*Raghuvamsha*, XII.8). A similar tribute is paid by Rāma to Bharata when the latter was suspected of having become intoxicated with power which had prompted him to march with his army against Rāma into the forest. To Lakshmaṇa, who, had voiced the suspicion, Rāma said, 'Harken, O Lakshmaṇa, in the whole of god's creation I have never seen nor heard of anyone so good as Bharata. He would never be intoxicated with power, even though he sat upon the thrones of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Shiva. Can a few drops of *kānjî* ever curdle the milky ocean ?' (Ayōdhyā, Dōhā 222).

Tulasîdāsa himself was a great saint and he has created his

twin heroes, Rāma and Bharata, almost in his own image. Even apart from his saintly detachment, Rāma has been depicted as a paradigm of virtue or virtuous life. He is generous and forgiving; a born pacifist, he takes to force only as the last resort. He confers the kingdom of Laṅkā, that had been won by Rāvaṇa after severe penance, on Vibhîṣaṇa, all along feeling uncomfortable for what he considered to be a small gift. He did not show any resentment or anger against Kaikēyî, his step-mother, who had been responsible for his exile. Thus Tulasîdāsa has been able to express the moral and religious values of Indian culture by exhibiting them in the lives and actions of his favourite characters.

11

Social Consciousness in Tulasîdāsa

PROF. RAMESH KUNTAL MEGH

The older philosophical theories of consciousness have greatly changed by now. Old theories were conceived as 'closed circles', while the new ones are visualised as 'processes of opening', of unfolding the many-petalled lotus of consciousness.

It is a proven fact, now, that there is certainly a difference between consciousness[1] and matter, there is no schism between the two. Man's labour, his work and activities which he undertakes as a social being, gradually influence his thinking, the carriers of which are words. Words reveal the concepts of objects as well as their inter-relations on a historical denominator. Therefore, metaphorically speaking, words and meanings, matter and consciousness, knowledge and activity are dialectically united like Bhavānî-Shankara (cf. Kālidāsa), or water-waves (Tulasîdāsa).

The discovery of 'unconscious' has provided consciousness with a comparative paradeim. Mental life is continuous

1. In a wider perspective 'consciousness' embodies the human psyche. It is a mental activity leading to the knowledge of self and the social environment. 'Self' and 'we' presuppose the consciousness with its individual and social ramifications respectively. It reveals the role of cultural patterns, values, ideals, ideas. symbols and the social reality.

in the unconscious while it is discontinuous in consciousness; in the former the experiences are vague, while they are ratiocinative in the latter; and, yet, both of them have contradictory mental structures. To some extent, this paradeim can help in clarifying the self-consciousness of Tulasî, for while various theoretical constructs of 'group mind', 'folk mentality' and 'collective consciousness' deny, on the one hand, the limitation of consciousness to individuals, they also, on the other hand, propel it onwards to class consciousness. Class consciousness is the missing link between the individual as a conscious being and the man as a preserver of his class interests.

Tulasî has unravelled the psychic depths of the archetypal myth of Rāma. In this mental process his complex self-struggle as well as social references are autonomically unfolded. In both of his autobiographically textured works—*Kavitāvalî* and *Vinaya-patrikā*, the internalised self is projected into 'we' and 'others'. Existentially he often adopts and selects the roles of 'others'. Gradually, he merges his 'self' (*Swāntah Sukhāya*) and becomes aware very soon of his identity as a member of a social group; especially as a Bhakta, as a Brāhmaṇa and as a poet.

First of all, let us understand him as a Brāhmaṇa.

Due to his birth under an ill-omened star and in the days of famine, he was considered to be an unfortunate Brāhmaṇa child who, after becoming an orphan in childhood, became a street singer, 'Rāmbōlā'. The consuming fire of hunger compelled Tulasî in his adolescence to seek alms and meagre meals from door to door, from the higher castes as well as the untouchables. The accumulated impressions of social acts in his childhood and adolescence resulted in an explosion in his consciousness. While in the mythic world of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, he glorifies the Brāhmaṇas with such epithets as 'the gods of the earth' (bhûdēva), the deities of the earth (bhûsura), this counter-system suddenly fades away into oblivion in his later works even though the objective conditions were equally favourable there too. Many of his dogmatic sayings about the Brāhmaṇas are apparently reaction-formations, and Bārānnikōv considers them as unauthentic. Historically, one is apt to conclude that they are the resultants of a social complex created by a peasant attitude

and the Hindû mythical mentality.

In a similar vein he superstitiously endorses the equivalence of the woman and the untouchable slave, so common since the days of the imperial feudalism of the Guptas. But there is a counter-system also—that he envisages in the same stages of his social ethos in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, for example. It acclaims the alternative to love, instead of the caste or the higher birth, as the basis of relationship with Rāma. The epic *Mānasa* itself is criss-crossed by the two modes of consciousness: the dignity of the religion of castes and institutions (Varṇāshrama), and the sweetness of the life and the world completely merged into Rāma. It is so revealing that afterwards Tulasî neither condemns the woman and the Shûdra nor idealises the Brāhmaṇa in the Hindû system. Obviously this indicates a point of departure in his social consciousness when, due to self-alienation and social conflicts, he even seems to have joined the camp of the caste-rebels. *Kavitāvalî* is full of such utterances (stanzas 72, 106, 107 etc.). After his ghastly encounter with the caste system of the Hindûs, his Purāṇic beliefs undergo a peculiar disillusionment. Hence the feudal relationship based on caste, wealth and family is replaced by a social reconstruct based on the love of Rāma.

His second role is that of a poet. Before his advent, the medieval age resounded with the recitation of the Purāṇic legends in the courts and the temples. By intermingling the traditions of Purāṇic recitations, various forms of folk arts and the patterns of the love tales of the Sûfîs, Tulasîdāsa has evolved epic structures and poetic genres which defy the canons of poetics. His epic can hardly fit into the classical structure of the ornate Epics, his concept of the Bhakti-rasa transcends the logical formulation of Rasa-sûtra of Bharata; and his concept of the Universal Good (Lōkamaṅgala) outgrows the framework of poetic functions enunciated by Mammaṭa. By implication his ideal of self-gratification is antagonistic to courtly pleasures, and is linked up with the saguṇa cult of the devotees and the poor peasantry. It is no more a 'constant' of self-consciousness; rather it represents the group consciousness of the bhakta and the peasant. It is a sublimation of his individual consciousness. For him all poetry and glory must lead

to the welfare of the society. Thus starts his estrangement with, nay, his opposition to, the courtly poets and the earthly kings ultimately alienating him from the feudal ideals propounded by Bhāmaha and Bhōja providing new contexts in self-gratification (Swāntah sukhāya).

Why so ? The nucleus of his new creative universe happens to be an organic metaphor. As Vāmana framed his poetic model of 'Kāvya-Yuvati' (the Youthful Maiden of Poetry), and Rājashēkhara that of the 'Kāvya-Puruṣa (the Prime Man of Poetry), so Tulasî invented a thematic metaphor of the ocean-cum-river (sara-saritā) which decided the structures and patterns of his generic artifacts [Mānasa(r), Dōhā(avalî), Kavitā(avalî), Geeta(avalî)]. This metaphor moved him apart from those conceptual frameworks which equipoised poetry either with the kingly man, or the pleasurable woman; he sought his identity in the Godly Man (Rāma). The eternal questions about the soul and the beauty of poetry were thus rendered somewhat meaningless, for Poetry itself was now identified with the eternally flowing river—the River Divine (transformed from 'Sara-Sari' to 'Sura-Sari' or the Gaṅgā).

In the philosophy of language, such phenomena move us from metaphorism to metamorphosis. Here it is a miraculous metaphorisation of the closed society (sara) and the unbound folkways (saritā) of the middle ages. The correlation between the metaphors of Mānasa and Sura-saritā (the River Divine) enabled him to weave the religious and philosophical world-views into them. And for that, he had to select, elaborate or discard certain secondary stories so as to represent coherently the new aspects of Rāma as well as the cult of Bhakti. The elaboration of the metaphor is architectonic: the four banks of the Mānasa(ra) raise from the plinth the ideological superstructure embodying the four symbolic forms of Rāma (the son of Dasharatha, the hero of Ādi-Mahākāvya, the saguṇa incarnate Viṣṇu, and the Nirguṇa Para-Brahma Rāma). Such a blueprint changes the structural complex of the plot itself, wherein different stylistics of the dialogues, with intermittent prayers and psalms and the hymns converge to raise upon another level the secondary metaphor of a Temple on the banks of a Pond. This whole configuration reveals many a layer of the archetypal

river bed with the plan of a small sacred town. The structure of the whole epic thus unfolds and overflows with the in-built energies of binary oppositions, such as Nirguṇa-Saguṇa, Gyāna Bhakti, Dharma-Adharma, Kaliyuga-Rāmarājya, etc., etc. The ultimate end of it all is a cultural contrast, emerging out of sociological imagination, between reality (Kaliyuga) and utopia (Rāmarājya). Inevitably, self-illumination ushers in a state of tranquillity. The tertiary metaphor of the chariot of victory stands as the poet's victory over self-alienation and the feudal inferno.

The above socio-synactics of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is enough to demonstrate the 'process of unfolding' of the social consciousness of the man and the poet Tulasîdāsa.

Now, another relevant question : How much was experience illuminated after the human redemption?

The grip of dogmas of the purāṇic culture was greatly loosened and the poet turned his attention towards the other forms of activities and organisations of the social system. Renouncing the mythic tone of Rāma, Tulasî herewith took a headlong plunge into his own Moghul times. The purāṇic styles of narration were also abandoned. The various forms of thought became so predominant that the focus of *Kavitāvalî* was not on the story of Rāma, but on its uttara kāṇḍa—the last canto—with its substructures of administration of the cities, socio-economic formations of villages, temples of the pilgrimage centres and the fortifications of the state capitals. The uttara kāṇḍa of *Kavitāvalî* is an authentic document of social history and cultural change, which reveals the conscious reactions and mental constructs of the poet. He is henceforth involved in decision-making also, i.e. he now makes a choice of a certain place (Chitrakûṭa, Laṅkā and Kāshî), of a certain time (the Moghul period), a particular ideal (the true king); and certain people (traders, farmers, servants, artisans, archers, gamblers, thieves etc.). This motivated activity of choice and decision-making replaces the philosophy and religious issues by the socio-economic ones.

Slowly coming out of his cultural island in pastoral and wild settings, Tulasî encompasses into his experience the new spheres of legal petition-making and hierarchical order of nobility in

the Courts of the Grand Moghuls in his *Vinayapatrikā*. Its structure and form are modelled on courtly protocols, and his great lord is here Rāma Sāhib. But there are also his feelings of pity and fear, social realities of poverty and cruelty, and his dissent against the power-pyramid which run parallel to these protocols.

Hanumān—the totemic semi-divine folk deity—is the hero of his work 'Hanumān Bāhuka', structurally less complex because of its being a song of praise for this divine benefactor of the poet. Yet its symbolic significance in the history of ideas is unique, for the thematic constructs of the terrible (kali) and the fearful (Rāvaṇa), hitherto juxtaposed, have now been merged into the goodness of Hanumān, aesthetically synthesising the opposites, and generating the aesthetic attitude of wonder and awe.

Some conclusions can be arrived at now. Clearly, the complex of the organic metaphor of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* fades out, giving place to different sub-metaphors suitable to the artifacts. It is also apparent that the intrinsic values of 'Ānanda' and 'Maṅgala' enshrined in the utopia of the *Mānasa* are displaced by submission (deenatā, K.V.), horror (V.P.), fierceness and terror (H.B.), etc. These ways make the poet a participant and a comrade-in-arms in the conditions of hunger, famine, diseases and atrocities. He shares the ordinary experiences of the poor folk. In brief, by gradually transcending the caste consciousness of the Brāhmaṇas, the poet starts speaking of the class experiences of the rural and ordinary people.

Recognising in practice the different elements and contradictions of feudal society, Tulasî has ambiguously framed a working model of society, the different aspects of which are discernible in the caste system (along with the external contradictions between the Kaliyuga and Rāmarājya) of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* in the economic set-up (including the basic contradiction between the peasantry and the land owners) of *Kavitāvalî*, the psychological configurations (including the sensibilities of meekness, timidity, inferiority, agony and piety) of *Vinayapatrikā*, in the physical conditions (of pain, torture, pity, etc.), of *Hanumān Bāhuka*, and in the traditions of beauty and bliss of *Pārvatî Maṅgala*, *Jānakî Maṅgala*, and *Gîtāvalî*.

Obviously no other poet of the medieval times has such a varied spectrum of social consciousness.

His position as a Bhakta creates an illusion in which the historical time and the mythic time (Kalikāla and the time of Rāma) are neither differentiated nor periodised; as if all was in a flux within Eternal Time. The degenerated Kali Kāla has the emotional axis of terror. In its paradeim, the cardinal factors of hunger, famine, poverty, plague etc. are strung together (*Kavitāvalî*)—which are later generalised and abstracted into the concepts of māyā (illusion), pāpa (sin), degradation, and greed (tṛṣṇā). Obviously this description conforms primarily to rural culture and folk life during the Moghul times. He also presents an ethical code based on social cooperation in order to fix a new stamp of idealism on social history. The ethical code envisages violence (parapîḍā) and service to others (parahita) as the greatest vice and virtue respectively. Such a shift of emphasis makes him more of a propagandist of social ideals and ethical norms than a philosopher. To sum up, his ethical code is pivoted around the observance of norms and standards (maryādōpāsanā).

Himself a victim of the tyranny of caste system within the framework of his ethical idealism, he lays emphasis on relationships based on love rather than on caste and birth. However, he strives for the stabilisation of the two basic relationships in the family : of father and the husband—the former for the progeny and the latter for the wife. These two male members are to be held in awful veneration whatever be their nature, status and character. He almost terminates the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas in his rural reconstruct, but the importance of the father and the husband is maintained in the family axis unexceptionally. Thereon he puts a benevolent king at the apex, to complete the pyramid.

This is how he evolved a working model of the feudal society with triple dimensions of structure. At this juncture, the historical sensibility as well as the multiple relation facets of the social consciousness of Tulasî can be visualised.

The medieval age was a feudal age with a 'closed society', and the vast majority of peasants had made it a 'traditional peasant society' as well. On this a cultural minority within the

upper castes of the Hindûs tried to impose a superstructure of Vaiṣṇava culture. This effected a qualitative change in the cultural set-up of the medieval times characterised on the one hand by the emergent Islamic culture, on the other by the traditional Vaiṣṇava culture and again on the third front by the folk culture with its revolutionary contents of folk languages and the popular Bhakti movement. This resulted in a peculiar cultural complex with a network of similar and dissimilar attitudes. On the one hand, there was a conflict between the folk culture and the Vaiṣṇava culture (Kabîra *vs*. Tulasî) and, on the other hand, there was a conflict between the Moghul culture and the peasant culture. The dialectical relationship between these sub-currents of cultures created complex but vital categories of religious attitudes, morals and manners, traditions and conventions.

In the traditional peasant societies of his times, the behavioural patterns were determined by rites and norms which hardly changed from generation to generation for centuries. The class structure of his traditional society was pyramidal : the landlord (Kshatriya) and the priest (Brāhmaṇa) were placed at the apex, while the peasant, artisan and the labourer formed the base and were therefore eternally condemned to a mean and low status. The economic productivity was at such a low level that misery, poverty, famine and exploitation were increasing at a galloping speed. The dignity of the masses in that society was essentially based on caste (varṇa) and family status (Kula). This chasm gave birth to a creative minority to which Tulasî himself belonged. Delinked with the ruling class with all its in-built system of oppression and exploitation, this creative minority brought a cultural renaissance in the form of the Bhakti movement and joined hands with the peasant society and the common folk. If, on the one hand, the Grand Moghul Empire was being consolidated, along with the spread of urban life, on the other, political organisation and the reformative administration was evolving a social pattern visualising in its framework, the concepts of Rāmarājya, Mahārājā Rāma Sāhib, and Pāra-Brahma Rāma, all emerging from the primeval depths of the archetypal substratum.

The perennial source of Tulasî's vital inspiration lies in the

innocent rural life around him. After the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, he makes a departure from the nexus of 'caste' (Varṇa) to ally himself with the consciousness of the peasantry, overtly and covertly. The nameless and the unknown common man could be seen in Shabarî, Guha, Niṣāda, Vānara and in so many totemic tribes; he could also be identified in the poor and the suppressed peasant, in the unemployed labourer and artisan.

Axiomatically it can be said that in Tulasîdāsa ruralisation of the feudal and medieval society has numerous ramifications. His conception of the feudal society has a bias. Initially, like a priestly Brāhmaṇa, he appears as a man of the medieval times, later on after the creation of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, he becomes the attendant of Rāma. The process of his self-liberation was thus moving parallel to the revival of the rural India of those days.

Tulasî hada limited freedom of choice for historical, social and personal change. He had freedom to choose any relevant aspect of the story of Rāma and to interpret the problems facing him and his milieu. The appropriateness of his choice of the specific aspects of Rāma's story is evinced by most of his works, except two—*Pārvatî Maṅgala* and *Hanumān Bāhuka*—and this choice reveals his historical vision in a social perspective linked up with rural foresight and peasant romanticism.

Thus, in the process of his choice and judgments, Tulasîdāsa has given expression by different methods to his consciousness of social history.

The first of such methods is the multilinear expression of folklore and the community sentiment. He has poured Rāmakathā into a folk medium, and this has been achieved by making Bhakti the axis of collective emotions.

The second method is the study of the behaviours and actions of the ruling minorities as also of the rival creative and rebel minorities trying to supplant them. In his bipolar treatment of the ruling groups and the creative cultural minorities of poets, devotees and saints, the complex social reality of the age is given a concrete form.

The last method he subjectively employed is the development of the ideas that eventually condition and guide the living of the innocent folk. By this method, he has also incorporated

his autobiography and the struggle of his personal life—thereby transforming the 'self' into society because Tulasîdāsa's creations present many of his self-assertions and self-alienations. The birds and the animals are depicted there through allusions, allegories, symbols etc. to represent new characters and characteristics, new problems and situations. In the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, the cow, the eagle, the vulture, the hare and the monkeys are either sacred totems or mythical personages. *Vinayapatrikā* on the contrary abounds in metaphors and illustrations of donkeys, dogs, crocodiles, reptiles, pigs, etc.

Another major theme which catches our attention is the radical change or shift of emotional configuration in the different works of Tulasîdāsa which delineate the critical turning points in the development of his social consciousness. While in *Vinayapatrikā* the feelings of pity and fear predominate, in *Kavitāvalî*, anger and piety are overflowing, whereas in *Hanumān Bāhuka* we are faced with the fierce, the grotesque, the terrible and the horrible, all merging into an intrinsic Goodness. Ceaselessly encountering situations of fear and horror, suffering self-condemnation and self-alienation, braving doubts and anxiety, the poet is eternally at war to stretch his bow of faith to achieve deathless victory.

As he was compelled by the contradications of the social reality of his times to transmute Rāvaṇa into the decline of the political state (Ravanu sō rājarōgu) and abject poverty (dārida dasānana)—both of them macrocosmic symbols—so also fought a great battle within himself to sublimate, superhumanise, aestheticise, and asceticise the instinct of sex (Kāma) into dedication to spiritualism (Rāma).

Thus the ideas and ideals of Tulasîdāsa are living records of his self-struggle on the one hand and documents of the complexities and conditions of the peasant mind on the other.

12

Social Life and Concepts-as Reflected in the Works of Tulasîdāsa

DR. (MRS.) SĀVITRÎ CHANDRA SHŌBHĀ

Tulasî (d. 1623) lived and composed his works[1] in an age in which society and politics had acquired a certain measure of stability after a long period of flux and uncertainty. During the preceding period, a number of saints and thinkers had denounced the institution of caste. However, caste still had a considerable hold on the masses, and was considered a vital element of Hindû society by orthodox thinkers. Tulasî attempted

1. It is not necessary to list Tulasi's works here. According to accepted notions, his main work, the *Rāmacharitamānasa* was completed in 1574. The works considered to be anterior to that are *Rāmalalā-Nahchhû*, *Vairāgya-Sandîpanî*, *Rāmāgyā Prashna*, and *Jānakî Mangala*. The works written after the *Mānasa* are *Vinayapatrikā* and *Dōhāvalî*. *Kavitāvalî* was the last. (See M. P. Gupta, *Tulasîdāsa*, Prayag, 1942, 2nd ed., pp. 209-70).

   In the present work, we have cited Hindustāni Academy's edition of *Sri Rāmacharitamānasa* by M.P. Gupta (Allahabad, n.d.) and other works of Tulasî from the *Tulasî Granthāvalî* (Vol. II, published by the Kāshî Prachāriṇi Sabhā, Kāshî, v.s. 2004, 3rd ed). This article is based on a paper being published under the title "Two Views of Hindû Social Life", in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Leyden.

to synthesise the prevailing ideas in a framework which would, while rejecting the iniquities of the caste system, be acceptable to the powerfully entrenched orthodox elements in Hindû society. This task was not an easy one and in attempting it, Tulasî at times takes up contradictory positions.

Classification of society

Tulasî adopts a dual approach to society. On the one hand, he classifies society on the basis of the essential qualities of individuals, and on the other he appears to conform to the traditional concept of *varṇāshrama*. However, primarily he divides society into three categories—*uttama, madhyama* and *adhama/neecha* or high, medium and low. A fourth category of *khala* or duṣṭa, i.e. the wicked or the vile is sometimes added to the above.[1] Tulasî makes an interesting suggestion regarding the proportion of these categories in society. He says that the *uttama, madhyama, adhama* and *khala* increase in proportion of one to ten.[2] It would imply that persons of high and medium categories comprised a very small fraction of society—less than one per cent if taken literally. This understanding forms the essential basis of Tulasî's attitude towards society and the state. If the evil, the wicked and the low constitute the overwhelming majority of the total population in society, social controls become necessary for keeping their evil propensities in check. As shall be argued later, this provided a basis for the entry of the concept of caste from the back door. It also provides a justification for the institution of monarchy.

Tulasî describes in detail the essential qualities pertaining to the different categories of people according to his classification. To the *uttama* or the first category of people, Tulasî ascribes ethical, spiritual and social qualities. The ethical and the spiritual qualities are to some extent traditional. They include humility (*vinaya*), absence of arrogance (*nir-abhimāna*), straightforwardness, equanimity (*samatā*), lack of attachment to worldly things (*anāsakti*), and above all, a sense of discrimination or understanding of good and bad (*vivēka*).[3] Tulasî

1. *Mānasa*, 2.273.2.
2. *Dōhāvalî*, 348.
3. *Mānasa*, 3.46.3; *Dōhā*, 167, 193, 228.

includes the saints in this category, laying considerable emphasis on their ethical and spiritual qualities.[1] But the saints alone do not comprise the category *uttama*. Other elements are also included, but one of their basic virtues seems to be their being unopposed to the saints.[2]

The social qualities ascribed to persons of the first category emphasise munificence and consideration for others. Giving help to others in various ways is considered important. Tulasî says that a person of 'high quality' should not be lax in helping others, or feel irritated or show disdain or a sense of unwillingness in doing so.[3] Tulasî goes on to say that in helping others, a person of 'high' quality is sometimes placed between two extremities—fire on the one hand and water on the other: if his means are straightened, he cannot ask for help from a friend who has 'limited means' (or limited capital —*Kṛṣi-dhana*) because that would be like being burnt in fire (i.e. death), nor can he ask for help from a poor person because that would be like drowning (from shame).[4] Perhaps Tulasî implies that a person of high quality should not only be self-respecting, but he should also be a man of means. This apparently would not have applied to the saints who are listed in this category.

Tulasî includes good rulers and their agents in the category of *uttama*. In a striking simile, he says: "The *uttama* person takes ripe fruits, and the *madhyama* unripe ones while a *neecha* snatches away even the leaves from the tree. Rulers should pay due heed and behave in a similar manner." In other words, a good ruler is one who taxes the peasants when their crop is ripe, a middling ruler is one who collects the tax even when the crops are unripe, and the evil ruler is one who ruins the tree, i.e. the peasants, by snatching away even the

1. These are discussed at length by Tulasi, *Vairāgya Sandîpanî*, 9-42. See also *Mānasa*, 3/45-46; *Vinayapatrikā*, 186/4,5.
2. *Vinaya*, 137/5. It is interesting to note that Tulasi does not insist that they should love the saints. But elsewhere he strongly condemns the *neecha* who are opposed to or oppress the saints. (*Vinaya*, 137/2).
3. *Dōhā*, 322-97; *Vinaya*, 205.
4. *Dōhā*, 335.

implements for their existence.[1] Again, the man of high quality, i.e. the good ruler, is compared to a cloud or sun who distributes his favours in an equitable manner to all.[2]

Tulasîdāsa lays considerable emphasis on the concept of friendship. In fact, it is this concept that has received, next to *bhakti* or devotion, the greatest emphasis. A friend in need should be helped whole-heartedly without having any doubts about his integrity. A true friend, according to Tulasî, is one who stands by his friends in times of adversity. On such an occasion he should, if need arises, help his friend even against his wishes. A friend should be helped irrespective of whether the task is light or heavy. It is the duty of a good friend not only to encourage his friend in doing his rightful duty, but prevent him from going astray. Hence, a good friend should be cherished like gold.[3] Tulasî thinks that friendship between equals may be a source of trouble. This idea is supported by the simile of *ghee* (clarified butter) and honey which mixed in equal proportions turn into poison.[4] He, therefore, advocates that friendship should be entered into with a person who is either superior or inferior to oneself. Thus, Tulasî's concept of friendship is essentially similar to the relationship existing between a patron and a loyal supporter.[5] From this Tulasi goes on to say that friendship or good and bad things in the world cannot be separated from self-interest. He opines that things appear to be pure or impure, helpful or unhelpful as long as they serve the purpose of the person concerned. He cites the example of teeth which are like jewels in the mouth of a

1. *Dōhā*, 510-511. Tulasî goes on to say that the preceptor, friend, a good ruler (*su-sāhib*) and the saints all advise that it is best to take ripe fruit from a tree, rather than to destroy it (by overtaxation).
2. *Dōhā*, 508. For a further discussion about Tulasi's concept of a good or a bad ruler, see the present writer's paper 'Tulasi's Concept of Rulership' *Procs. Indian History Congress XXXIII Session* 1972, pp. 325-334.
3. *Dōhā*, 322, 325; *Mānasa*, 4/7/1,2,3.
4. *Dōhā*, 323.
5. This follows from Tulasî's concept of *bhakti* or the doctrine of grace. For Tulasî the relationship between God and devotee is that of *swāmî* and *sēvaka* (master and servant). It is not like the love between Krishṇa and Rādhā which was based on equality.

person as long as they help him (to chew his food) but are bones when they fall out, i.e. cease to serve a purpose.[1] This does not mean that Tulasî advocates an utterly selfish or a utilitarian philosophy, but that he does not ignore the practical aspects in life. Here, as elsewhere, Tulasî's essential humanism comes to the fore.

Contrasting the good and the bad, the noble and the ignoble, Tulasî says that untruth is poison to the good, while for the evil person, truth is poisonous and evaporates like mercury when exposed to fire.[2] Steadfastness and absence of duplicity are considered to be the most important qualities for persons of high quality. Tulasî laments that in his times people were like peacocks who wore beautiful dresses and spoke sweet words, but were hard-hearted and full of duplicity (*kapaṭu*). Such persons could never be straight and are, therefore, likened to snakes.[3] However, Tulasî strikes a hopeful note. He says that duplicity cannot last for long and becomes apparent at the testing time.

Tulasî does not say much about the man of middling qualities. Perhaps that is so because by definition, the man of middling qualities stands in between the good and the low. Tulasî does, however, mention some qualities which are specific to the persons of middling qualities. He says that whereas everyone looks after one's own welfare, there are some who also look after the welfare of their friends and relations (*swajana*). This is contrasted with the good man who looks after the welfare of every one [4] The friendship of a man of middling qualities is likened to a line drawn on sand, i.e., it is transitory, whereas the friendship of a good man is like a line drawn on stone. The friendship of a low man is as ephemeral as a line drawn on water.[5]

1. *Dōhā*, 330. Elsewhere, Tulasî adopts a somewhat cynical attitude saying : तुलसी स्वारथ मीत सदा (even friendship has a selfish motive)—*Dōhā*, 52. See also example of silk-worms which die after they have served their purpose. (*Dōhā*, 370).
2. *Dōhā*, 339.
3. *Dōhā*, 332, 337; *Mānasa*, 4/7/4.
4. *Dōhā*, 357.
5. *Dōhā*, 353.

Tulasî says that a man of low qualities and status—the term *neecha* comprises both—has to be kept firmly under control. Such a person is compared to a snake which never forgets its nature and harms its own benefactor, or is like smoke which as a cloud puts out the fire which had given birth to it. The friendship of a man of low qualities is likened to a kite which soars only when the string is kept tight. Tulasî considers that the rise of a man of low status of evil nature (*neecha*) is fatal. Such a person is like dust : it does no harm to anyone as long as it lies on the ground and is trampled under foot, but when the wind raises it up in the sky, it vitiates the atmosphere and pollutes even the crown of the ruler, i.e., harms the highest.[1] The show of abjectness (*vinaya*) by such a person is dangerous indeed because it is like a snake drawing back its hood in order to strike. The *neecha* becomes arrogant when he amasses a little wealth.[2] No heed should be paid to his words.[3] He is not amenable to kindness, and deserves dishonour (*nirādara*) which in fact he cherishes.[4] In the ultimate analysis, persons of this type can be kept under control only when the state is governed by a good ruler.[5]

It would thus appear that Tulasî's views of men of low qualities and status reflect the traditional thinking about the lower orders in society. He maintains that the *neecha* are not in the least affected by the company of good or high-charactered persons. Instead, they influence the high-natured ones and drag them down to their own level by their evil company. High minded persons should, therefore, shun the company of the evil.[6] Tulasî opines that if this is done, evil, like Rāvaṇa, is bound to fail.[7]

Although Tulasî is generally considered to be hostile to women, his attitude towards women is determined basically by

1. *Mānasa*, 7/100/5.6; *Dōhā*, 401.
2. *Mānasa*, 3/21/6, 24/4, 4/14/3.
3. *Dōhā*, 354, 383, 387.
4. *Mānasa*, 5/58; *Dōhā*, 354, 338.
5. *Mānasa*, 4/15/2.
6. *Dōhā*, 337, 341, 360, 361, 362, 364, 380.
7. *Mānasa*, 6/91/3, 92/2.

his view of society. Women are an integral part of society since an overwhelming section of society, according to the poet, consists of the *adhama* and the *khala*, a fairly large number of women must naturally fall in this category. Tulasî divides his female characters basically into two categories : the first consisting of those high-minded ladies, such as Sîtā, Sunayanā, Mandōdarî, etc., who understand *Rāja-nîti* or the science of polity, are loyal to their husbands, and offer aid and counsel to them in moments of crisis. The second consists of those who are short-sighted, are led by their passions and are destructive in their thinking.[1] Like the *neecha* and the *shûdras*, such women must be kept under strict control.[2] Control is thus the key-note in Tulasî's thinking about society and social relations. Elsewhere, Tulasî looks upon woman as an incarnation of *māyā* or ignorance. But we need not dilate upon Tulasî's philosophical concepts here.

While classifying society according to the qualities of individuals, Tulasî also upholds the traditional concept of *Varṇāshrama*.[3] Describing his ideal society as *Rāma Rājya*, Tulasî says that those who observe their duties according to *varṇas* and are devoted to the path prescribed by the *Vēdas* are always happy and free from ailments, and have no cause for worry or sorrow.[4] In this situation, while everyone has material comforts, all professions, such as agriculture, learning, commerce, service and crafts (*shilpa*) prosper.[5] In the Kali age, on the other hand. due to *Varṇa-sankara*[6] people have foresaken propriety, they have become sinful and are surrounded by sorrow, fear, disease and deprivations. It may be noted that though *Varṇa-sankara* is often interpreted as the admixture of castes through inter-marriages, it actually refers more to the confusion in the duties

1. *Mānasa*, 6/16/1, 2.
2. *Mānasa*, 5/59/3 ; 4/14/4.
3. *Mānasa*, 7/20 ; *Doha*, 451.
4. *Gîtāvalî*, 6/22/10, 7/1/4 ; *Doha*, 181.
5. *Mānasa*, 7/100/3, 3, 5 ; *Dōhā*, 100 ; *Kavitā*, 85. In the Kali age people of different castes are encroaching on each other's prescribed duties (*Varṇāshrama*) which has resulted in a perfect chaos all around.
6. *Dōhā*, 183, 184.

(*dharma*) of the various castes. It is clear from the context that by *varṇa-sankara* Tulasî means the confusion in the duties of various castes rather than the admixture of castes due to inter-marriages.

Tulasî further avers that in the Kali age, the *Brāhmaṇas*, instead of devoting themselves to the study of the *Vēdas* and teaching the other three castes (*āshrama*) how to lead an ethical life, have themselves strayed from the true path. They have become greedy and are busy accumulating material wealth. The sacred thread is the only outer symbol signifying their caste.[1] They have not only become ignoramuses and sensualists but allied themselves to women of low character. On the other hand, the *shûdras* consider themselves to be as learned as the *Brāhmaṇas* ; they enter into disputations with them and adopt an over-bearing attitude. They take part in *japa*, *tapa*, *vrata*, (ascetic practices and recitations of *mantras*), sit on a high seat, and discourse on the scriptures. They consider themselves to be in no way inferior to the *Brāhmaṇas*, but even superior to them, and make the *Brāhamaṇas* worship them. Tulasî concludes sadly that such *shûdras* despot both this world and the other.[2]

It would appear from Tulasî's description of the confusion among castes, his lament over the decline of the position of the *Brāhmaṇas*, and the rise of numerous new sects, some of which are opposed to the *Vēdas* and to the *Brāhmaṇas*,[3] was in some measure, a reflection of the social reality staring the poet in the face.

Tulasî's concept of the role of the different *Varṇas* in society is traditional.[4] He expects learning from the *Brāhmaṇas*, obedience from the *Shûdras*, and protection and safeguarding of society by the *Kshatriyas* or *Rājapûts*. Protection includes cherishing of the weaker elements in society. The ruler is asking to look upon the people as his children, and as being as dear to

1. *Mānasa*, 7/101/4.
2. *Mānasa*, 7/100/3, 4, 5.
3. *Kavitā*, 7/84, *Dōhā*, 555, 556.
4. *Mānasa*, 7/20.

him as his own life.[1] In addition to this concept of benevolence. the ruler is conceived of as being well-versed in *nîti*. *Nîti*, according to Tulasî, is all-comprehensive : it includes kingly duties (*rāja dharma*) as well as the defence of righteousness which, in turn, is linked with the defence of the four-fold division of society.[2]

Tulasî equates the ruler with Kshatriyas. It is the duty of the Kshatriyas, or the rulers, to expand his territories by means of war.[3] He condemns the rulers of the times who depart from the traditional practice of returning the kingdom to the defeated ruler after forcing him to pay tribute.[4]

Although Tulasî does not describe Vaishyas separately, in his description of towns and town life, he lays adequate stress on the role and affluence of the trading classes. It is apparent from Tulasî's description that the *baṇika* or the trader was expected not to live in penury, but as a man of means to be generous towards the poor and the needy.[5]

Tulasî's attitude towards the position of *sādhus* and saints in the caste system is ambivalent. He says that caste restrictions do not apply to saints. He goes to the extent of saying that even a *chāṇḍāla*, i.e. a man of the lowest caste, is better than a man of high caste (*kula*) if the former is a devotee of Rāma and the latter is not. Similarly, even a low-caste *sadhu* is superior to a man of high caste (*kulîna*) since the former recites the name (of God) every day.[6] In fact, Tulasî ascribes good qualities to the low born, and vicious snake-like qualities to the high born. He says that a saint had no caste, nor has he any religious restrictions : he can beg from anyone, or sleep (even) in a mosque.[7] Elsewhere he condemns the *sādhus* of the time who had had no real learning or saintly qualities, yet who preached

1. *Mānasa*, 7.21.1, *Dōhā*, 512.
2. *Mānasa*, 2.152.2.
3. *Mānasa*, 1.154.
4. *Mānasa*, 1.154.4.
5. *Mānasa*, 2.172.3.
6. *Vairāgya*, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.
7. *Kavitā*, 7.106.

to others. Many of these, he says, belonged to the low castes.[1]

City and village life

Tulasî describes the lay-out of the town in the context of Ayōdhyā, the capital of Rāma ; Laṅkā, the capital of Rāvaṇa ; Janakapurî, the capital of Rājā Janaka ; and Kāshî.[2] The description of the first three cities appears to be grounded in tradition, but it also reflects to some extent the pattern of city life visible during Akbar's period, since, it seems, it had not changed in any marked manner.

As compared to this, Tulasî does not shed much light on the pattern of life in the villages. While Rāma wanders through the jungles, he hardly ever enters a village.[3] Though Tulasî draws similes from rural life and from the processes of cultivation and sympathises with the villager for his hard lot, the village folk are called rustics who are ignorant and who, like scholars and women, need to be kept tightly under control. If that is so, we can hardly call Tulasî a poet of village life.

According to Tulasî, the cities generally had a wall (*parakōṭā*) with carefully guarded entrance-gates. In the description of Laṅkā, it is said that the gates were so carefully patrolled that no one could enter without being challenged. Inside the city were the ruler's palaces which, too, were carefully guarded.[4] The city consisted of a network of streets and houses. It seems there was no planning of the towns whatever. Tulasî asserts that the lay-out of the city of Ayōdhyā was so complex that even Brahma could not comprehend it. There is no mention of any principal streets in the cities. The heart of the city apparently consisted of markets and cross-roads, the squares formed by the latter acting as a meeting-ground for the citizens.[5] During festivities, the town and bazars were decorated with banners, floats of silk-cloth (*paṭōra*), flowers, etc.[6] For Tulasî the

1. *Mānasa*, 7.100.3.
2. *Mānasa*, 1.212, 213, and 216, 6.3.5, 6, 1, 2, 3 ; 7.172.
3. *Mānasa*, 5.59.3.
4. *Mānasa*, 6.3.3.
5. *Mānasa*, 7.28.5 ; 5.3.
6. *Pārvatî-Maṅgala*, 87.

cities were the centres of trade and commerce where merchants reaped rich profits by selling their commodities.[1] The markets were full of miscellaneous type of goods, cloths of various kinds, such as cotton, wool, hair (*rōma*), silk and leather. There were numerous shops of jewellers, goldsmiths, and money-changers (*sarrāfs*). The various types of merchants mentioned by Tulasî are *bajāja* (*cloth dealers*), *mahājana* (money-lenders), *sarrāf* (money-changers, jewellers), etc.[2] All these apparently comprised the various types of *baṇiks* mentioned by Tulasî.

The cities were a concourse of people and animals—elephants, horses, mules, etc. There were animal-markets too where cattles were bought and sold.[3]

The cities had many fine lofty houses several storeys high.[4] They had balconies from which women and children watched ceremonial processions.[5] While the houses were topped by round-shaped finials (*kalasha*), the roof, pillar, and floor were finished with multi-coloured plaster made from lime (*gach*), or with semi-precious stones—carnalian, amber, amethyst, etc. The rooms were decorated with multi-coloured curtains, and wall-paintings. The houses had courtyards and gardens full of flowers and fruit-trees as well as awnings for the enjoyment of the women of the house. They had strong doors, which were usually guarded by *chowkîdārs*. Most of the houses had an outer room (*chaupāl*) for the reception of visitors or a platform (*chabûtarā*) on the street for the purpose.[6]

Tulasî says that the most magnificent palaces and houses belonged to the king, his advisers (*mantrîs*), army chiefs (*sēnāpati*), and celebrated warriors. Apparently, some of the mansions belonged to rich merchants also.

The palaces etc. had stables for elephants and horses

1. *Mānasa*, 7.212.2 ; 7.28.4.
2. *Mānasa*, 7.28.4 ; 6.3.1 ; *Dōhā*, 289, 395.
3. *Vinaya*, 141 ; *Kavitā*, 5.23.
4. *Mānasa*, 7.26.3, 7.212.3.
5. For instance at the time of Sîtā's *swayambara*, the royal ladies sat in the balconies to watch the proceedings. (*Jānakî Maṅgala*, 72; *Mānasa*, 1.22.2).
6. *Mānasa*, 1.213; 7.27.2, 3, 4.

with a great sense of self-importance which is harmful to society.[1]

Tulasî does not show any special familiarity with the processes of agriculture or of village life. He classifies land vaguely into good, middling, and bad, and into productive and unproductive (*ûsara*) tracts.[2] He uses the processes of agriculture in his similes, however. For instance, he compares the body to cultivable land, deeds to the cultivator, and good deeds and sin to the seeds.[3] He mentions many of the familiar products including rice, particularly *shāli-rice*, which was considered to be a vintage variety of rice.[4] He also mentions barley, gram, wheat, oil-seeds, cotton, *kōdōṅ*, etc.[5] and attaches special importance to sugarcane which, he says, was produced in low-lying areas.

Tulasî considers the life of the peasant to be hard.[6] There were recurrent famines which constituted a special feature of the *kali age*. As a result, the peasants were even forced to sell their women and children. Loss of their lands placed the peasant in an unenviable position, and they did not know what to do or where to go.[7] Apparently many of them flocked to such towns as Kāshî.

Apart from famine, the peasant was also oppressed by tax-collector. Tulasî refers to *māwās*, or fortified places, from which peasants sometimes defied the tax-collectors.[8] Tulasî's advice to the ruler, however, was that he should not be oppressive in collecting taxes.

1. *Dōhā*, 328; *Kavitā*, 7.30, 39; *Mānasa*, 5.54.3.
2. *Dōhā*, 465; *Vinaya*, 80.
3. *Vairāgya*, 5.
4. *Kavitā*, 7.103; *Mānasa*, 2.253.1. Some of the other crops mentioned are wheat (*nai*) *Dōhā*, 109; gram (*Dōhā*, 151) ; Barley (*Kavitā*, 5.7); *Kōdōṅ* (*Kavitā*, 5.40) ; cotton (*Dōhā*, 342) ; *til* (*Dōhā*, 198, 403, 206); sugar-cane (*Dōhā*, 343) etc.
5. *Dōhā*, 342 ; *Vairāgya*, 39.
6. *Dōhā*, 478
7. *Kavitā*, 7.96-97.
8. *Dōhā*, 559; *Hanumānbāhuka*, 18. Most medieval villages were fortified and sometimes could offer stiff resistance. See Akbar's experience with such a rebel village paraunukh in Etāh dist. (Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nāmā*, ii, pp. 163-165).

An interesting feature is Tulasî's description of the process of settling a new village. This process or the process of breaking uncultivated land (*banjara*)[1] was often carried out with the help of displaced peasants from other villages. The life of such peasants was not always happy, and Tulasî refers to *pahikhētî* or cultivation of land by outsiders.[2] This concept was a familiar one, but the word *pahi* has not been used by Abul Fazl or any other contemporary Persian writer of Akbar's reign. Tulasî's familiarity with it implies that it was a well-established system which was common knowledge.

It will be apparent from the above that a careful analysis of the literary works of the period is helpful in understanding the social concepts, value systems, patterns of behaviour, etc. current during the medieval period in India.

The main social concept put forward by Tulasî is that of equipoise of *samatā*. Equipoise implies control which is both personal and institutional. For the individual, equipoise implies a grasp of *dharma* and *vivēka* or a sense of discrimination. Institutional controls are necessary in society since the large majority of the people have evil propensities. Institutional controls are both social and political. One of the most important institutions of social control, the *varṇāshrama dharma*, implies that people belonging to different groups should discharge their responsibilities without encroaching upon the duties of others, i.e. of those belonging to other *varṇas*. Transgression of duties or discharging those which are not one's own leads to *varṇasankara* which is the cause of social disequilibrium. The state and the ruler are both necessary for chastising the evil doers and for upholding the four-fold division of society. It may be noted here that Tulasî's ideal of *varṇāshrama* was not based on heredity but on the intrinsic qualities of individuals. This being so, Tulasî does not merely stand for the *status quo*.

1. *Vinaya*, 145.
2. For a discussion of *pahi*, see Satish Chandra, "Some Aspects of Indian Village Society in Northern India during the 18th century—The position of the *Khud-Kāshta* and *Pahi-Kāshta*", *Indian Historical Review*, Delhi, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974, pp. 51-64.

As a sensitive poet, Tulasî was moved by the sorrow, want, and poverty which afflicted the common people. However, his essential humanism does not make him a systematic social reformer, much less a revolutionary. He did not attempt the creation of a new social order, though he did dream of a society based on justice (*Rāma Rājya*). Nor was he a mere traditionalist as has been argued above. The strength of Tulasî as a poet was his humanistic portrayal of the complex social reality facing him. In his attempt at synthesising the contemporary social reality and presenting it in terms of universal truth, Tulasî sometimes adopted contradictory positions. But his contradictions are not so much personal as a reflection of the contemporary reality itself. Thus, Tulasî's writings have a vital link with the life and times in which he lived.

13

Tulasîdāsa's Conception of Rāma

PROF. U. B. SINGH

Tulasîdāsa was a great poet, a social reformer and a devotional philosopher—all combined into one. Essentially, he was a philosopher poet. He, therefore, visualised Rāma as the ideal hero of his poem, the noblest embodiment of human virtues, and a Personal God always ready to remove the sufferings of the oppressed. Thus, we find in his delineation of Rāma a combination of the idealisation of a real man and the realisation of an ideal god.

Rāma is one according to Tulasîdāsa. He is the Universal Spirit as well as a Personal God who manifests himself in human form for the benefit of the righteous people on earth. He is the emblem of beauty, power and virtue—the main characteristics of an ideal hero. In accordance with the philosophical and poetic approach of Tulasîdāsa, his conception of Rāma can be discussed under the following two heads :

1. Rāma : The Brahman (Supreme Being).
2. Rāma : The Puruṣōttama (Excellent man).

Rāma : The Brahman (Supreme Being)

There has been a lot of controversy among the theistic philosophers regarding the true nature of God. Divergent views have been expressed by different schools of thought. Tulasîdāsa has a synthetic approach inspired by his own

experience and vision.

The Supreme Being has been denoted by various names—Brahman by the Vēdāntins, Viṣṇu by the Vaiṣṇavas, Shiva by the Shaivas, and so on. Tulasîdāsa holds that names and forms are not the essence but merely attributes of God. They serve as means to realise him. The seeker has the option to choose any one of them. The name 'Rāma' is preferable to others for a number of reasons. It is more significant indicating one who pervades all and to whom all are attached. It is more convenient and effective for Nāma-Japa (muttering of prayers), leading the worshipper to salvation even if muttered in a reverse order. Of all the incarnations, Rāma has done the greatest good to the greatest number. Moreover, the name is acceptable to the Nirguṇa School (Exponents of Impersonal God) as well.

The true nature and being of Rāma transcends all utterance, wisdom and knowledge. He is beginningless, endless, limitless, changeless and beyond all description.[1] Sages have tried to describe him to the best of their understanding, but that is only a part of the truth.[2] He is Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss ; the very light untouched by illusion.[3] He is Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the universe.[4] Creation and destruction of the world in this context denote respectively evolution and involution.

Rāma is the supreme cause of the cosmos—instrumental as well as material.[5] This riddle can be understood through the analogy of a spider which weaves its cobweb with the material emitted from within itself, and withdraws it at its sweet will. Similarly, the cosmic world is emitted from Rāma and completely absorbed in Him at the time of dissolution.

The entire universe (visible or invisible) is nothing but the manifestation of Rāma just as the cloth is nothing but

1. *Rāmacharitamānasa*, 2.126 : *Dōhāvalî*, 199 ; *R.*, 1.118.2, 7.92.
2. *R.*, 2.93.4
3. *R.*, 1.116.3.
4. *R.*, 6.7.2.
5. *R.*, 1.186.

thread, the (earthen) jar is nothing but earth, the (wooden) elephant is nothing but wood, the (golden) ornament is nothing but gold, and the coil (of serpent) is nothing but the serpent itself.[1]

Rāma is essentially Nirguṇa as well as Saguṇa.[2] The English words Finite or Personal and Infinite or Impersonal are incapable of connoting the exact sense conveyed by these terms. By Nirguṇa Tulasîdāsa means having no form, described by negative epithets, and beyond the materiality of matter. By Saguṇa he means—having a form, an emblem of divine virtues, and appearing as if endowed with the attributes of matter.

He maintains that Nirguṇa and Saguṇa are not incompatible. The apparent contradiction can be satisfactorily resolved. The analogy of fire aptly explains the point. Nirguṇa Rāma is just like the invisible fire existing in wood, and Saguṇa Rāma may be compared to the fire visible in the form of flame.[3] Rāma does not change like matter. His corporal appearance is supernatural, as declared by Lord Krishṇa in the Gîtā.[4] He has been negatively praised (as beginningless, endless, formless, etc.) to show his incomprehensiblity ; but at the same time truth, consciousness, bliss, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, affection, compassion etc. are the divine qualities which determine the essential nature of Rāma.

Tulasîdāsa's conception of Rāma as Personal God is based on psychological grounds. It is extremely difficult to concentrate one's mind on the Nirguṇa, whereas the Saguṇa easily becomes an object of worship, and satisfies the emotional needs of faithful devotees. The inactive and indifferent Impersonal God (Nirguṇa) is utterly useless for the person who is suffering from acute worldly miseries. Naturally, he envisages and takes resort to a Personal God who is always ready to listen to his grievance and extend his mighty arms to protect and support the aggrieved soul. The confidence thus

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 54.3-4.
2. *R.*, 1.23.1.
3. *R.*, 1.23.2.
4. *Gîtā*, 4.9.

created in the mind of the agonised is in itself a valuable achievement. His graciousness and approachability impelled Tulasîdasa to dedicate himself to Saguṇa Rāma in preference to the Nirguṇa.

Rāma, the Transcendental Being, incarnates for the sake of the virtuous. This is technically called *Avatāra,* which etymologically means descent. Though ominpresent, He is conceived of by the devotees as abiding in a self-luminous, immaterial and blissful heaven (Vaikunṭha) from where he descends on earth by His will according to the need and desire of the virtuous. The purpose of His incarnation is threefold : to annihilate the wicked and the vices ; to establish law and order ; and to relieve, protect and delight the virtuous.[1] Rāma has been represented to have achieved these goals to the greatest extent.

Unlike the Krishṇaite thinkers, Tulasîdāsa does not grade the incarnations of Rāma as full (Pûrṇa) or Primary (Mukhya) and Partial (aṁsha) or Secondary (gauṇa). He regards Rāma as full, perfect and unimpaired. It is a different matter that the deeds of a particular incarnation (such as *Matsya* or *Kûrma*) are limited and those of another (such as Rāma or Krishṇa) are extensive.

According to Tulasîdāsa, Rāma is the Supreme God who incarnates, and also the incarnation. Both are one and the same.[2] The difference lies in appearance and not in essence. But he has very often described Rāma as the incarnation of Brahman[3] and yet in other contexts has spoken of Him as the incarnation of Viṣṇu.[4] There is no incongruity in his apprehension. Tulasîdāsa's Rāma is identical with the Brahman as propounded in the Vēdānta, and also with Viṣṇu (the Supreme Deity) of the Vaiṣṇavas. As regards the term Viṣṇu, he uses it in two different denotations : 1. the Supreme Being, and 2. the second deity of the sacred Triad (Tridēva) entrusted with

1. *R.*, 1.121.
2. *R.*, 1.117.3 ; *Vairāgyasandîpanî*, 4.
3. *R.*, 1.110.2, 1.203.3.
4. *R.*, 1.51.1; *Vinayapatrikā*, 54.3.

the preservation of one solar system (Brahmāṇḍa). The former is one and peerless, the latter are countless in number and merely partial manifestations of the divine faculty of Rāma.[1] He is called Viṣṇu only in the former sense.

Rāma is the Lord of Māyā. Māyā represents the inherent and mysterious power of Rāma. Its functions are twofold. Accordingly, it is said to be of two kinds : *Vidyā* and *Avidyā*. *Vidyā Māyā* is the creative principle responsible for making the cosmic world appear and disappear. Being the effect of Māyā, the empirical world is also called Māyā. *Avidyā Māya* is the ignorance or illusion which conceals the real nature of things from the view of individual souls and shows the One as Many.[2] It is due to this illusion that the individual soul becomes worldly, a victim of subject-object-complex (Jaḍa-Chētana-granthi), and suffers from acute miseries.[3] One can attain freedom from illusory bondage through the grace of Rāma, and Rāma-Bhakti (devotion to Rāma) characterised by complete surrender to Him is the surest way to win His grace.[4]

Rāma : The Puruṣōttama (excellent man)

According to Tulasîdāsa, the purpose of poetry is twofold : *Rasa* (experience of aesthetic pleasure) and *Maṅgala* (good of all). In the very first stanza of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, his *magnum opus*, he has clearly expressed his view-point. He has further emphasised the act of benevolence in a number of passages.[5] He had to choose a theme suitable for the purpose. He was influenced in this respect by his personal experiences as also the political, social and religious conditions prevailing in the country. Circumstances required the selection of a hero well-known to people for his benevolent deeds and adherence to the traditional values of life, whose delineation might inspire the readers to attain the heights of human ideals. Tulasîdāsa

1. *R.*, 1.144.3.
2. *R.*, 3.15.1-3.
3. *R.*, 7.117.1-3.
4. *Vinayapatrikā*, 114.5, 116.5; *R.*, 3.16.1, 6.117.
5. *R.*, 1.10, 1.14.5.

found the desired qualities in the personality of Rāma.

Due to his devotional fervour, he strongly believed that it would be an insult to poetic talent to sing the glories of an ordinary man. The devices and endeavours of a poet are wasted till they are bathed in the lake of Lord Rāma's favours.[1] However fine the composition of a skilled poet be, it lacks in elegance unless endowed with the Name of Rāma, It may be compared to an extremely handsome woman seen without clothes even though adorned with precious jewels. On the other hand, the verses composed by a comparatively inferior poet and devoid of all the poetic excellences are listened to and honoured by saints like bees for their sweetness.[2]

Tulasîdāsa's conception of poetry is motivated by his spiritual approach. The average literary critic may find it difficult to agree with him. But there is undoubtedly some psychological justification for his stand-point. Both philosophy and poetry aim at the experience of joy through the freedom of mind. This freedom of mind can more successfully be achieved through devotional poetry than by any other kind of composition. Tulasîdāsa explains the utility of devotional poetry by the analogy of an elephant who seeks refuge in a lake while oppressed by the fierce flames of jungle fire. Likewise, the mind of *jîva* (an individual soul) is burning in the fire of sensual desire, and it finds quick relief when it turns to the *Ramācharitamānasa*, the lake of the holy deeds of Rāma.[3]

Tulasîdāsa could have chosen any other incarnation for the theme of his epic, but that would not serve his purpose. Of all the incarnations of God, Rāma and Krishṇa have been held in high esteem for their multifarious, heroic, benevolent and gratifying deeds as compared to others. Krishṇa had, certainly, destroyed demons, established the rule of justice and delighted the devotees but he was more famous for his amorous sports. A light-hearted and gentle hero, fond of dance and music, would not fit in the context which required a man of valour, recognised for his ideal character and philanthropic

1. *R.*, 1.11.3-4.
2. *R.*, 1.10.2-3.
3. *R.*, 1.35.4.

acts. Rāma, traditionally known as *Maryādāpuruṣōttama* (an excellent man committed to social justice), satisfied all the conditions in this regard.

Indian poeticians have laid down certain essential characteristics of an ideal hero. He should be exalted lineage, well-bred, young, charming, affable, liberal, upright, clever, eloquent, resolute and popular; endowed with intelligence, energy, fine memory, wisdom, self-respect and aesthetic sense; heroic; mighty, vigorous familiar with the codes of conduct, and an observer of laws.[1] Rāma, as conceived of by Tulasîdāsa, had all these ideal virtues in him. Moreover, he was a person of great excellence, self-confident and yet modest, exceedingly serious, forbearing, never boastful, and firm in his purpose. He had in him a combination of beauty, virtue and prowess—the three divine powers leading to universal happiness, preservation and establishment of Dharma (law and social order).

Rāma was so handsome that everyone who beheld him was fascinated by his charming personality. His moon-like face attracted the moon-faced ladies of Ayōdhyā.[2]

The excited girls of Janakapur peeped through windows to see him and at once fell enamoured.[3] The effect of Sîtā is difficult to describe. On seeing Rāma in the flower-garden, she took him home to her heart by the gate of eyes and closed the door of lids on him. When she drew near him after the ceremony of Bow-Breaking, she was struck by his loveliness and stood still like a picture.[4] The village men and women, the ascetic Janaka, the revengeful enemies (Khara and Dûṣaṇa) and even the deer and does were charmed by his extraordinary beauty.[5]

His might is respected everywhere. A powerless man can neither defend himself nor protect the distressed ones. Rāma had to fulfil the mission of destroying the dreadful anti-social elements and restoring confidence in the people to realise higher

1. *Dasharûpaka*, 2.1-3; *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 3.30.
2. *Gîtāvalî*, 1.34.6.
3. *R.*, 1.220.2.
4. *R.*, 1.264.2.
5. *R.*, 2.114.4, 1.215.4, 3.10.2-3; *Kavitāvalî*, 2.27.

values of life. Tulasîdāsa, therefore, depicted him as a vigorous, energetic, heroic and mighty prince. Rāma showed his prowess from boyhood when he slew Tāḍakā and Subāhu to relieve the sages of Vishvāmitra's hermitage. The dawn of his glory was heralded at Mithilā by the breaking of the Bow of Shiva. Later on he killed Virādha, Khara, Dûṣaṇa, Mārîcha and many other demons.

The real test of a hero's might is the chief opponent (Pratināyaka). A person who defeats a helpless weak enemy does not deserve any credit. Tulasîdāsa, therefore, delineated Rāvaṇa as a formidable opponent, a monarch of all he surveyed—who ran wildly here and there, mad with war-lust but did not find a matching foeman to fight. Not to talk of common men, even the powerful gods and demi-gods yielded to him and acknowledged his suzerainty.[1] Rāma established his superiority by his glorious victory over such an invincible enemy.

A beautiful and mighty person may be characterless. His vices are apt to distort his image in the public eye. Tulasîdāsa was aware of this fact. He, therefore, laid adequate emphasis on the qualities of head and heart, the moral aspect of Rāma's personality with due recognition to his matchless beauty and physical power. Affability, self-control, morality, etiquette, modesty, fidelity, etc. constitute the character of Rāma. A few instances will suffice to illustrate the point.

Lakshmaṇa was feeling restless to visit the city. Rāma too must have been equally eager. But he did not speak about himself. He respectfully sought Vishwāmitra's permission to show the city to Lakshmaṇa and earnestly promised to bring him back very soon. Impressed by his courtesy and etiquette, Vishwāmitra was glad to permit him.[2]

The talented poet has admirably designed the situation of love at first sight. The environment of sanctity is remarkable. Rāma went to the flower-garden under the instruction of reverend Vishwāmitra to collect flowers for worship. He was accompanied by his younger brother.[3] Sîtā was asked by her mother

1. *R.*, 1.182.5-6.
2. *R.*, 1.218.
3. *R.*, 1.227.1.

to go to the garden to worship goddess Pārvatī. She was accompanied by her maids.[1] The purpose of their visit was sublime. Their love was not tinged with sexual desire. The sympathetic attitude of their companions represents social sanction, though on a limited scale.

The haughty kings, gathered for Bow-Trial, were overwhelmed with their lust for Sītā. Within seconds of the announcement, they rushed to the Bow but their strenuous efforts proved futile. By contrast, Rāma remained self-controlled as his love was not blind. At last, Vishwāmitra asked him to get up and shatter the Bow. He rose from his seat without any excitement, joy or sorrow. He lifted, bent and broke the Bow at ease. It was a miraculous performance. Showering of flowers by gods, and dance and music by heavenly damsels on such occasions simply indicate universal recognition of and applause for his laudable acts.

Dasharatha sent Vashiṣṭha to Rāma to inform and prepare him for *Abhiṣēka*—the coronation-ceremony. On his arrival, Rāma along with Sītā touched the feet of his teacher and reverently said with his hands humbly clasped : 'My lord, your visit to the house of this servant brings greatest good and averts all disaster.'[2] The courtesy and respect thus shown by a prince is an evidence of his sweet disposition and inherent culture. This kind of affability can be seen everywhere in his conversations with Kaushalyā, Kaikēyī, Sumantra, Guha, Bharata, Sugrīva and others.

Tulasīdāsa's Rāma, though a prince by birth and position, was a man of the people and he worked for the people. He did not feel shy of playing with the children of common folk in Ayōdhyā.[3] While in Mithilā, he moved about the place of Bow-Trial with the boys of Janakapur chattering with them politely and pleasantly.[4] Fourteen years of his exile are particularly marked by his association with the common people, most of them living in forests. He was a source of pleasure, security and inspiration to them. When Sītā was kidnapped

1. *R.*, 1.228.1-2.
2. *R.*, 2.9.1-3.
3. *Gītāvalī*, 1,41,43.
4. *R.*, 1.225.1-2.

by Rāvaṇa he made friends with Sugrîva and organised an army of monkeys and bears (representing the lowest strata of society) to recover his wife. He expressed gracefully his deep sense of gratitude to them for rendering help in need.[1]

His role as a king was magnanimous. He devoted himself entirely to the people. No one suffered throughout his kingdom from any kind of afflictions of mind and body or from the tyranny of fate or wild animals.[2] Rāma-Rājya (the Reign of Rāma) has since become a symbolic expression for an ideal state in which all the citizens are happy, dutiful, healthy, wealthy and wise. Tulasîdāsa was not happy with the political situation around him. The circumstances did not permit him to criticise openly the despotic rulers. He, therefore, resorted to the suggestive power of words. He described Rāvaṇa and other demons as criminal desparadoes and ruthless tyrants ; and Rāma as a saviour of the people. Symbolically, Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa signifies the victory of virtue over vice, of justice over injustice, of truth over untruth and of knowledge over ignorance.

Unlike Kālidāsa and other poets, Tulasîdāsa has not described the departure of Rāma from earth, even though Pārvatî had specifically asked Shiva to explain how Rāma returned to His Heavenly abode.[3] Tulasîdāsa is silent on this issue. He intends to suggest two points. Firstly, Rāma, the Universal Self, is omnipresent. He only manifests Himself in the form of incarnations. The question of His departure, therefore, does not arise. Secondly, death is not the goal of life. Life is real and earnest—a continuous struggle for existence and ceaseless endeavour for sublimation. Rāma set an example in this regard. He took life to be duty and observed it sincerely in various capacities—as a son, as a disciple, as a brother, as a master, as a husband, as a friend and above all as a king.

He was just a young boy when he came in conflict with demons like Subāhu and rid the society of such pests. He successfully competed with powerful kings at the Bow-Trial. After marriage he gladly led the life of an ascetic and remained

1. *R.*, 7.8. 3-4.
2. *R.*, 7.21.1.
3. *R.*, 1.110.

in exile for fourteen years facing bravely all sorts of odds. On his return from the forest, he ascended the throne not for selfish ends but for the sake of the people. He sacrificed his personal happiness in public interest. Informed by his spies that the citizens of Ayōdhyā were losing confidence in him because of his acceptance of Sîtā who had stayed in Laṅkā for some time, he exiled his beloved wife without the least hesitation. He banished his dearest brother Lakshmaṇa who was charged with negligence of duty by sage Durvāsā. Such extraordinary acts of Rāma undoubtedly prove that he was a Man par excellence.

In spite of all this commendable record, Rāma was not completely free from blemish. He dispatched a woman (Tāḍakā) at the instigation of Vishwāmitra. He incited Lakshmaṇa to cut off the nose and ears of a woman (Sûrpaṇakhā). He killed Bāli treacherously. He exiled his wife and brother in order to please the citizens and a sage respectively. He assassinated Shambûka only because the poor fellow was practising penance. These actions have been defended from one angle of vision and criticised from another. A devotee views them as the *Lîlā* of Rāma (mere sport of God) performed for universal good. This idealism does not appeal to the modern humanist. He judges them by social standards and declares them as objectionable. A literary critic may agree or disagree with either of them, but he appreciates the depiction of human nature in particular situations. Man is said to be a bundle of weaknesses and these weaknesses make the ideal Rāma appear more real and human. The fusion of ideality and reality adds to the poetic excellence of Tulasîdāsa's composition.

Vālmîki had depicted Rāma as a great man, Tulasîdāsa established him as God. The purāṇas had described Rāma as God, Tulasîdāsa humanised him, made him a living and lively character, a subject of human emotions and an object of popular appeal, love and respect. Thus we can see that God has descended to the level of man, and man has ascended to the status of God in the Rāma of Tulasîdāsa.

14

Emotive Appeal in Tulasîdāsa

THE LATE ĀCHĀRYA RĀM CHANDRA SHŪKLA

The best way to judge a poet's aesthetic sensibility is to find out whether he has successfully identified such situations in a narrative as have a direct emotive appeal. The following are the most touching incidents in the story of Rāma : His banishment from Ayōdhyā and exit to the forest as a common wayfarer ; the reunion of Rāma and Bharata at Chitrakûṭa ; the hospitality extended by Shabarî ; Rāma's lamentation for Lakshmaṇa who was rendered unconscious by the missile thrown by Mēghanāda, and Bharata's long and anxious waits for the home-coming of Rāma. Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa unmistakably identifies these phases of the story because it is precisely these episodes that receive an elaborate and detailed treatment from him. What can be more touching than the poignant spectacle of a pretty prince abandoning his royal palace and rambling from one forest to another along with his younger brother and wife ! Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa describes the scene with a deep sense of involvement in the *Mānasa*, *Kavitāvalî* and *Gîtāvalî*. The number of verses dealing with this description is the largest in *Gîtāvalî*. Tulasîdāsa knew it full well that a scene like this would move the women-folk most, that it could arouse unbounded compassion, and a feeling of selfless affection in them. It is precisely because of this that he brings

rural women-folk into the picture. These women are overwhelmed by a sense of affection roused by the unparalleled charm of Rāma and Jānakî ; they are moved by a feeling of remorse at the callousness of the King of Ayōdhyā and they curse the manoeuvres of Kaikēyî. Their mood softens as they find themselves face to face with those three members of the royal family who looked like beauty personified ; they forget their own selves for a while. This softness gives birth to a sense of beneficence :

> "With emotion all bodies were thrilled, all eyes moist ;
> Ev'ry one seeing these two young heroes rejoiced."
>
> (*Atkins*)

and further,

> "Beyond words their condition ; such joy did abound,
> As when beggars a heap of heaven's jewels have found."
>
> (*Atkins*)

Tulasîdāsa's depiction of the touching scene of Rāma and Jānakî's exit from Ayōdhyā is really superb. Rāmachandra, an emblem of virtue and grace, cheerfully hands over charge of the servants to the preceptor of the family. He beseeches everybody to behave in a manner that would mitigate the agony of the King. The effect of his graceful behaviour is so pervasive that his separation afflicts even birds and beasts. On his return to Ayōdhyā, Bharata finds the streams and pools devoid of their usual charm and the town wearing a frightful look. Had Bharata got the information of Rāma's banishment, we would have explained this change as a projection of his own mood, but he knows absolutely nothing of what had transpired until he steps into the palace. To us the streams and pools are devoid of their usual gaiety since there are no crowds and the entire scene is enveloped in grim silence. People are stunned by the tragedy of separation from their beloved prince. Who can think of going out for a dip in a stream or a pool ? This is how we understand it. But for a poet of such intense emotional sensibility as Tulasîdāsa, the vast land of Ayōdhyā is immersed in unmitigated gloom, the entire town is in tears.

The meeting of Bharata and Rāma in Chitrakûṭa represents the union of modesty with modesty, of affection with

affection and of morality with morality. The divine atmosphere generated by this reunion was a sight for the gods to see. It is just unprecedented. Inspired by 'fraternal devotion and love', Bharata forges ahead barefoot to persuade Rāma to return to his Capital. On the way, his eyes overflow with tears whenever he is informed that this was the venue where Rāma and Lakshmaṇa had stayed during their onward journey.

> "When he came to the tree where dear Rāma had lain,
> All his heart's deep emotion he could not restrain."
>
> (*Atkins*)

While Bharata moves ahead, he goes on enquiring of the people as to where Rāma was stationed now, and whoever tells him that he had seen both of them in good health, becomes as dear to him as Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. Amongst the three mothers, Rāma first met Kaikēyî and met her with all affection. Was it just to tease her ? Not in the least ! He met Kaikēyî affectionately because that was the prime necessity—not to make a show of his own importance or his endurance but for her own mental relief. The sense of remorse which she was feeling on the havoc she had caused could be wiped out only by Rāma's initiative. Nobody else could actually help. He plainly told his mothers :

> "Mother, there is a destiny soaring over this world : nobody is to blame !"

The poet left no scope for doubting the genuineness of Kaikēyî's feeling of remorse. Her callousness was not a part of her natural disposition ; it was a sudden phenomenon. Even if it were natural to her, Rāma's modesty and simplicity were quite capable of softening it.

> "Kaikēyî was moved to the deepest contrition,
> By seeing the brothers' and Sîtā's condition.
> 'O God,' She prayed inwardly with ev'ry breath
> 'May the earth open for me and bring peaceful death'!"
>
> (*Atkins*)

How could beauty of virtuous conduct possessed by that assembly which had fascinated even the forest tribes on to a

righteous path, leave Kaikēyî—herself a part of the group—unaffected ?

The impact of this meeting lends piety to the charming environments of Chitrakûṭa. The divine light that shoots forth from the interaction of qualities like morality, affection, modesty, humility, and sacrifice within that assembly illuminates the entire atmosphere. The sweet memories of that meeting seem to cast a pious spell over the entire forest land even today. What transpired at the assembly at Chitrakûṭa was a perfect manifestation of virtue in all its aspects. This assembly is really a spiritual event in the *Rāmacharitamānasa.* This congregation of so many aspects of righteousness, this rallying of so many sublime attitudes into one focus, could be possible only in the vast—the all-pervasive—consciousness of Tulasîdāsa. It was made possible by the inclusion of a variety of groups in the assembly. The deep righteous content and emotive quality of the context present a fascinating study of the mutual behaviour of the ruler and the ruled, of the preceptor and the disciple, of brother and brother, of mother and son, of father and daughter, of father-in-law and son-in-law, of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, of Kshatriya and Brāhmaṇa, of Brāhmaṇa and Shûdra, of the refined and the rustic. The urban people, the rural folk and the foresters are all charmed by that manifestation of righteousness of conduct. If somebody wanted to have a first-hand knowledge of Indian civility and culture, he could be invited to witness this majestic assembly. In what a refined language and how eloquently are the resolutions moved, how courteously and with what sobriety are the questions answered, how gracefully is due consideration shown to age. Everybody wants Rāma to return to Ayōdhyā but perhaps none, with sole exception of Bharata, wants that Bharata might suffer the sentence of banishment in place of Rāma. With all their ardent wishes, people assemble there, but as they become a part of the assembly their personal desires evaporate into thin air in that purifying atmosphere of righteousness. The glory of the King which rests on truthful conduct is sought, by all means, to be retained intact by the subjects. They, therefore, ruthlessly curb their emotions and submit to the better judgment of such infallible judges of law and righteousness as

Janaka, Vashiṣṭha and Vishwāmitra.

The richness of a poet's emotional faculty consists in his capacity to place himself in all possible human situations and experience corresponding emotions. Rāma's life-story provides the largest scope for the play of this faculty. Where else can one find such a wide variety of circumstances ? And who can match the emotional sensibility of a poet who proves his mettle in this field ? Those who specialise in delineating conjugal love or excel in putting across an impressive account of unbounded valour can claim to possess only an imperfect emotional sensibility. Perfection lies in the identification of all kinds of emotive situations and in recreating them through the expressive power of words. Amongst the galaxy of outstanding Hindi poets, we find only Tulasîdāsa possessing such an all-round emotional faculty, and it is because of this rare quality that the *Rāmacharitamānasa* has been the most popular work of poetry in the whole of North India. After passing through a phase of parental affection, the reader has a direct view of the exploits of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa in an alien land, exploits that help to develop a sense of self-reliance in the princes. After witnessing Rāma's affection towards his preceptor, we are then led to Janakapur to have a fine view of the most serene and sacred conjugal attachment of Sîtā and Rāma. The pathetic scene of their exit from Ayōdhyā reflects the irony of fate, involving those unforeseen vicissitudes of life which take a man unawares. The reader then follows the couple to the forests where he experiences a peculiar kind of love embosomed in rural folk, a love which defies all definitions and is yet so natural.

Seeing a tender princess being escorted by two valiant self-reliant princes amongst the scenic beauties of hills and forests, turning their affliction into joy, the village-folk realise by direct experience the validity of the dictum that those who are brave enjoy the bounties of the earth. Passing through the agony suffered by Rāma after Sîtā was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, we witness the scenes of horror at Laṅkā set ablaze by Hanumān and ultimately land into the ferocious battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. There are touches of the emotion of tranquillity in between. The sentiment of humour, though not present as an integral part of the actual life-history of Rāma,

does find a place in the episode of 'Nārada-Mōha'—the infatuation of Nārada. Thus, those who cherish higher ideals of poetry, are captivated by effective representations of myriad forms of joy and sorrow which constitute human life, whereas others, who are content with only a superficial view, are delighted to find detailed portrayals of all the nine 'rasas' and a skilful use of large variety of figures of speech enumerated by the rhetoricians.

One may very well argue that if Gōswāmi Tulasîdāsa succeeded in incorporating such a rich variety of human situations in his *Mānasa*, the credit goes to the richness of the theme—the life-story of Rāma, where all this is more or less automatic. While agreeing with this contention to a certain extent, it must also be pointed out that a live depiction of all these situations is not possible without magnanimity of heart, an all-embracing empathy, without the power to invent effective forms and contexts—and lastly, of course, without a complete mastery over the medium of communication. In Gōswāmî, we find a deep emotive sensibility capable of identification with multifarious aspects of human nature which was not possible for any other Hindi poet. Beauty delights him, power makes him bow with deference, virtue arouses a joyful response within him, merit brings forth a sense of respect, vice causes scorn, tyranny gives rise to indignation, the divine phenomena amaze him, hypocrisy causes irritation, grief arouses compassion, joy a feeling of ecstasy, beneficence generates a sense of gratitude and greatness a feeling of humility—all these come to him so naturally that every experience leaves behind a potential image.

While admitting the expanse of his emotive faculty, one may very well ask if his emotions have the same depth and intensity ? If they did not have that intensity, if his words were not filled with emotional richness, how could they have such universal appeal ? Expressions of ordinary emotion do not produce that effect. Quite obviously, the emotion that comes most naturally to the poet finds the deepest and most powerful expression. And that is devotion—the most exalted form of love which is unearthly, steady and unique. It is the proverbial love of the chātaka[1] for the cloud :

1. The Indian bird Cuculus.

"Faith in one, the only source of strength, hope and trust,
Tulasîdāsa is a chātaka to the deep dark cloud of Rāma."

The beloved of the chātaka brings happiness to the people at large. It is really great, great for all and sundry. The chātaka's love thus includes by implication a joyful acknowledgment of greatness. The humility that the poet expresses in relation to this greatness is real; it comes from within; it is humility born out of love. Any other form of humility could be nothing but a kind of greed, fear or some such feeling. If the chātaka were to express his humility to anyone other than the cloud whom he holds in the highest esteem, then the genuineness of his feeling would be suspect, the exclusiveness of his love would be affected. A person who goes abegging from door to door can never attain that state of humility which is a part of devotion. The greatness that arouses genuine humility finds expression in these terms :

"Glory belongs to the lot of the chātaka alone,
For in all the three ages and in the worlds
Never has he been heard O Tulasî !
To bow to another Master in humility !"

What attracts our attention in this relationship is the fact that this love is not directed towards an equal but towards one who is greater or higher. Gōswāmîjî considers this form of love to be better than the love between equals.

What he really implies is that in the relationship between the great and the small, a sense of righteous duty is inherent. If the beloved is small, our love towards him will arouse feelings of kindness, favour, forgiveness, compassion, support, etc.; on the other hand, if he is great, our feeling of love for him shall arouse faith, respect, humbleness, modesty, politeness, gratitude, sense of obedience, and so on. The feeling of love our poet cherishes for his Master falls, undoubtedly, in the latter category—it is devotion charged with deep reverence. The sense of elevation attained through self-surrender to the exalted can certainly not be achieved through submission to an equal. I have stated elsewhere that piety is an inherent attribute of the object of devotion, as depicted by Tulasîdāsa. The relation between devotion and piety is the same as between an image

and its reflection : it is a correlation between the subject and the object. Moving one step further, we realise that the correlation between the subject and the object is exactly the same as between the 'knower' and the 'knowable'. The 'knower' and the 'knowable' in the field of knowledge have the subject (āshraya) and the object (ālambana) as their counterparts in the field of emotion.[1] As the knower and the knowable merge into one at the climax of knowledge, so do the subject and the object at the climax of emotion. This should suffice for understanding the identity of piety and devotion.

Conjugal love, too, has been depicted by Tulasîdāsa most tastefully and with a remarkable sense of restraint. He would never transgress the bounds of decency like the authors of 'nāyikā-bhēda' (classification and categorisation of traditional heroines) or like the poets who were so full of Krishṇa's amorous activities.[2] The serenity of the pious love between Sîtā and Rāma that finds its first manifestation in Mithilā, acquires an ever-exalted form of conjugal relationship in different situations of life. Just when Rāma is going to succeed to the throne of Ayōdhyā, he is commanded to go to the forest. Jubilant scenes are suddenly transformed into pathetic sights. When Rāma explains to Sîtā the usual sufferings of forest-life and urges upon her to stay back in Ayōdhyā, she replies :

"Together they're nothing at all if compared
With my suffering, if with you life cannot be shared."
(*Atkins*)

Under severe strains of affliction, we find the cool soothing shade of love for the tired wayfarer on the road of life. A love of this sort does not detract one from the field of action, it only covers the thorns strewn all around with flower-petals. The rural folk, when they find Rāma and Jānakî traversing the forest barefoot, exclaim :

"To the woods when God sent them, this also he owed,
That with fragrant soft flowers He brighten the road."

1. In the absence of more appropriate equivalents, the terms 'subject' and 'object' are used here to convey the concepts inherent in the words 'आश्रय' and 'आलंबन' of Sanskrit.
2. The mysterious dance performed by Krishṇa and the 'gōpis'.

Walking through the forest for a while along with them, however, they must have been convinced that their course was certainly 'strewn with flowers'. Love had transformed the forest into a place of joy. Sîtā experienced a kind of happiness that was impossible for a thousand Ayōdhyās to provide :

"The woods, as her heart's love at Rāma's feet rested,
With pleasures of countless Avadhs were invested."
(*Atkins*)

What is the secret of this happiness which surpasses the happiness ever experienced in Ayōdhyā ? More occasions to be at the service of the beloved. How could Ayōdhyā provide such frequent occasions for company and service ? Here in the forest they have to look after life's daily needs themselves. Preparing a straw hut, cleaning the space in and around the hut, carrying water-pots, gathering fuel, and collecting edible roots and fruits formed an essential part of life in the forest. This life in the midst of nature could provide such occasions for the growth of love as are impossible in sophisticated surroundings. A village woman, desirous of having a similar opportunity to join her beloved, expresses herself thus :

"It's so lucky that fire broke out and burnt the house,
I passed on the water-pitcher into my beloved's hands !"

Another reason for this happiness was their complete consonance with the myriad forms of nature which made them feel as if the 'birds and beasts' around were a part of their family. Who else, if not the 'mother of the world'—Jānakî, could have that softness of heart—Jānakî who felt immensely sorry for leaving back her saplings and flowers ?

After Sîtā's abduction, we find this love opening out a very fascinating avenue where strength and valour rise to their climax to annihilate oppression and immorality. The profound agony caused by the separation from Sîtā in the forest does not lead to a mere tossing-about in bed. It is love of a different kind altogether. It was not a separation that caused the gōpîs to shed streams of tears for Gōpāla who was hardly at a stone's throw in Mathurā; it was not a kind of separation which brought incessant flow of tears from Rādhā's eyes for Krishṇa who

had just concealed himself behind the bush for a while. It is a separation that impels Rāma to traverse through lonely forests and hilly terrains to organise a heterogeneous army at his command to redeem the earth from sins. Placed in contrast with the profound nature of this feeling of separation, the one depicted by Sûradāsa, in spite of all its hyperbolic intensity, sounds like a child's play.

Before Hanumān made his appearance, Sîtā was muttering to herself in a state of severe mental agony :

> "The full moon gives no fire, but there blazing with light
> Seems to see and approve my unfortunate plight."

Further, she pleads with the 'Asōka' tree :

> "Your fresh flame-coloured buds here and now to me lend;
> Let them burn me up, bringing my life to an end."
> (*Atkins*)

At this point Hanumān (perched on the tree above) drops down the ring, and Sîtā, thinking it to be ember, lifts it in her hand. This evinces Tulasîdāsa's skill in plot construction and introduces an episode to which there is no reference in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki. In the presence of Hanumān Sîtā gives expression to her suffering with the same restraint as a mother would have before her son. She first enquires about the well-being of Rāma and his younger brother (not of Rāma alone) and then goes on to ask why he had become so indifferent to her :

> "Tell me, does Raghunāyaka of me ever think ?"

and, then, she asks if she would ever again be blessed with his divine company—

> "Will my eyes be made glad with the vision again
> Of his dark, tender body ? or is my hope vain ?" (*Atkins*)

The first typical characteristic of an Indian woman in separation is her anxiety about the well-being of her beloved. The lingering doubt as to whether her spouse is happy or else in a state of suffering lends a touch of kindness or compassion to her feeling of separation. In an Indian wife of noble birth, this feeling of separation is imbued with a seriousness of purpose : it is not the cheap sentiment of wandering love-birds.

Nor is this separation so self-centred as to be concerned only with one's own suffering, unmindful of the plight of the beloved.

Tulasîdāsa draws such an exquisitely fine picture of this pious conjugal love when the rural women, pointing towards Rāma, embarrass Sîtā by asking as to how he was related to her :

> "Brows lifted and face with her veil's border covered,
> T'wards Rāma she looked and her gaze o'er him hovered."

And then she musters all her courage to signal :

> " 'My husband'—her eyes gave the signal bewitching,
> Aslant, like the tail of a wagtail quick twitching."
> (*Atkins*)

How can all the unrestrained and loud utterances of love vie with the serenity and melody of this under-expression ?

Tulasîdāsa's depiction of pathos also is most heart-rending. In the story of Rāma, as recounted by Tulasîdāsa, we have two such occasions—one is the occasion of Rāma's banishment from Ayōdhyā and the other arises when Lakshmaṇa is fatally wounded by a missile in the battle of Laṅkā. The gloom that envelopes Ayōdhyā in the wake of Rāma's banishment is all pathos; it is not just the pang of separation from a beloved who leaves for another place. This banishment to the forest just when he was to ascend the throne is most grievous :

> "King Kaikaya's daughter in ignorant malice,
> By causing such suff'ring has wronged,
> And done greatest injustice to Rāma and Sîtā
> To whom at this time joy belonged." (*Atkins*)

This grief of the relatives and the subjects, therefore, was born of their identification with Rāma's unhappy plight, and not merely of the prospect of separation from him :

> "There rose as they went off, unbearable wailing,
> From all the poor people, courageousness failing."
> (*Atkins*)

This gloom (which is an auxiliary of the basic sentiment) and this outburst of grief are really pathetic. The grief caused by the agony of the beloved is pathos; the sadness caused by parting from the beloved for a while is separation. The sorrow

of the people at the unfortunate banishment of Rāma at that particular juncture is, therefore, an admixture of the agony of separation and pathos. Although in the verse 'Tulasî Rāma Viyoga-soka basa samujhata nahiṅ samujhāyē,' the expressions of the agony of separation and of pathos are merged into one, yet we can, if we like, also view their existence separately !

Here is an example of the agony of separation :

"As Kaushalyā beholds her lonely mansion,
Her restlessness and sorrow grow day by day,
Tears overflow and she knows not whom to embrace !"[1]

On the other hand, pathos or gloom finds exclusive expression in contexts such as this :

"Of well-refined sweetness his nature's composed ;
He was never to hot winds or hardships exposed."
(*Atkins*)

and now—

"He—not ! (Ah ! my heart in its hardness is worse,
Than great thunderbolts) shares the world's troubles and
curse." (*Atkins*)

This pathos reaches its climax at the time of Dasharatha's demise. From the description of Ayōdhyā's sad plight on this occasion there flows a strong current of pathos that sweeps the reader off his feet along with the people of that town—

"Avadh seemed now a place of dread, terror and doom,
As tho' over them settled Dark Death's midnight gloom ;
Their own homes seemed like graves, fellow citizens
ghosts,
Their close friends and their children the Death-Angel's
hosts." (*Atkins*)

This gloom cast over the royal family is so passionately depicted by the poet that not only the citizens of Ayōdhyā but everybody feels involved in it because it relates to a character whose slightest grief would rend the hearts of all sensitive men.

1. Although Rāma was not quite young at the time of his banishment, yet the poet makes Kaushalyā utter all these words to convey her affectionate feelings.

The other pathetic scene relates to the lamentation of Rāma when Lakshmaṇa, struck by Meghanāda's missile, falls down unconscious. All his pledges and self-discipline, all his firmness and resolution seem to be lost in the intensity of his grief :

"Had I known this jungle life your loss demanded,
I' not have obeyed what my father commanded."

(*Atkins*)

Those who do not understand the implications of this mood as well as those who indulge in hypocrisy in the name of idealism will deprecate this as self-condemnation. But if the idea of the loss of a dear brother, who always stood by his side in the hardest times of adversity, were not to make Rāma forget all other considerations for a while, how could we have a glimpse into that inner softness of the Lord which holds out a ray of hope for His devotees ? This softness of heart, this sympathetic disposition transcends all laws and rules. Let down by barren laws and rules, confounded by the rigid ways of 'Karmavāda', finding the latent 'knowledge' and the invisible 'power' to be inadequate, the forlorn man directed himself to the search of the imperceptible 'heart' and ultimately discovered it in the cult of devotion. A devotee's Lord is not just a totality of rigid, unchangeable laws. He is an unfathomable ocean of forgiveness, kindness, magnanimity, etc. What we see of these attributes in the mundane world is but a drop out of that vast ocean.

The descriptions given by Tulasîdāsa of the mood of self-condemnation in its purest form are perhaps impossible to find elsewhere. The feeling of remorse or self-condemnation is born in a clean and virtuous mind. Where could then one find a more appropriate base for it than Bharata's conscience ? The mental depression which leads to a mood of self-condemnation emerges either as a result of the consciousness of one's own guilt or through a sense of inferiority born of the feeling that one's association with evil has become publicly known. Bharata's remorse was, of course, of a different kind, but it was at the same time profound and genuine. What proved to be an unbearable agony for him was that in spite of his true affection

and reverence for Rāma and a deep sense of devotion, he should be treated as Rāma's 'opponent'. He became restless to get rid of this weight on his soul ; it was impossible for him to contain this intense sense of remorse :

"None like me is so wretched and cursed in this world,
Since by me to these depths of despair were you hurled."
(*Atkins*)

and then, condemning himself, he says :

"Accurst ! I'm fire in a forest of cane,
Of all torments the worst, an unbearable bane." (*Atkins*)

He is constantly harassed by the idea that whatever his clarifications may be, world opinion will not exonerate him (of the charge of conspiracy). Confronted with Kaikēyî, this feeling of self-condemnation acquires a touch of righteous indignation. Its sanctity imparts an enchantment even to the defiance of the mother by Bharata :

"How did you make bold to utter such bitter words :
'I command you to the woods.'
How did you cherish this idea in your ruthless heart ?
You aspired to enjoy all comforts as the queen-mother
and make me ascend the throne."

"Who else except you could have the idea
That brings slander and sin to our clan.
Rāma will be back one day, all will attain happiness
And God will purge me of this disgrace.
I am, however, greatly worried to think—
How will you bear with your life ?"

For once he feels frustrated that the infamy heaped on him will never die away, but, then, there is a turn in his chain of thoughts. He feels hopeful and tells Kaikēyî, "God willing the blot on my name will be wiped off and I shall one day be able to hold my head high, but how will you spend your life ?" He is sure that his infamy would not survive Rāma's return. It was his firm belief that even though the whole world considered him a villain of the worst order, Rāma would never harbour such a feeling.

He has such unshakable faith in Rāma's virtue ! All

credit to the virtue that commands such immense faith and hats off to the faith that sticks to virtue in such a steadfast manner. Bharata's only ray of hope is this faith. Every word that Bharata utters to Kaushalyā, by way of explanation, testifies to his clean conscience. The following words reflect his inner agony :

> "Sins of thought, word and deed such as these, at all times,
> Poets tell of—all foul and despicable crimes ;
> May the guilt of them all, mother, on me be laid,
> If these foul plots and plans were with my consent made." (*Atkins*)

Numerous explanations by thousands of advocates would not measure upto this explanation, and a million oaths would fall short of this oath. He has opened up a heart that imparts its sanctity to others.

We find a good illustration of the sentiment of humour in the episode of 'Nārada's illusion.' Nārada sat in the 'Swayamvara',—the assembly of suitors, his face replaced by that of a monkey, all the time aspiring to charm the princess :

> "No other sensed anything secret or strange,
> Except the princess ; she—aware of the change...
> But where Nārada sat and where swelling pride beckoned,
> She turned not her gaze ; No, not even for a second.
> (And Nārada was all the while getting more and more restless)
> He fussed and he twisted and changed his position ;
> His tormentors laughed when they saw his condition."
> (*Atkins*)

Even this humour of the poet is restrained ; it is a 'graceful' smile, humour of the genteel. Besides, it has a purpose of its own ; it is not humour for its own sake but a means to purge the sage of his infatuation and vanity. The object of humour here does not assume the unnatural character of a stock jester.

If one were to look for entertainment, one could find it in the 'Sundara Kāṇḍa' where a long-tailed monkey can be seen

staging a dance with the top of his tail set on fire and the demon children clapping and jumping around it. A moment later this scene is transformed into one of unusual ferocity and horror—a scene that one would never forget. *Kavitāvalî* gives a detailed and complete picture of the 'burning of Laṅkā'.

For example, look at this scene of fearful commotion :

"Run for life. O sweet-heart,
Run, run my darling !
Run quick, O father !
Ye son ! Keep running ;
People in jitters,
Say this in distress ;
Let the Ten-Head behold it with twenty eyes."

Within this episode of the burning of Laṅkā, we have a loathsome scene :

The entire gold got molten like ghee
The town of Laṅkā turned into a vast boiling cauldron,
And mighty demons tossed about therein like eatables in the frying pan.

If one wished to experience, in short, the sentiment of indignation with all its prescribed ingredients, this one is really striking.

King Janaka's challenging words rouse Lakshmaṇa's wrath—

"...Lakshmaṇa was angry, he lifted his brows
Lips quivered, eyes reddened and flashed as wrath rose."

and, his counter-challenge is equally sharp :

"To utter such nonsense let none ever dare,
Among men, if of Raghu's line one man is there."
(*Atkins*)

In this extract the external manifestations of the sentiment are distinctly described—and 'wrath' is the auxiliary feeling. Some fault-finders may discover that the sentiment has been referred to by the denoting word, but if it has been fully communicated through external manifestations, the denomination of 'emotion' is not a fault.

The whole of 'Laṅkā Kāṇḍa' is replete with examples of militant heroism. The expression of the sentiment of zeal is superb and the portrayal of battle scenes most fierce and awe-inspiring. His skill in describing militant heroism finds expression in three styles : in the vigorous style of the bards of the old Rājapût era, in the eloquent style of the Court poets and in his own characteristic style.

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa's zeal for handling the bow (of Shiva) and the description of the fierce bow-breaking feat are full of heroic elation. Infuriated by Janaka's utterances, Lakshmaṇa retorts :

> "If once I am granted permission, My lord !
> You will see the miraculous performance of your humble servant,
> I shall break the bow like a lotus stalk : then only shall I deserve being called your younger brother.
> And what, after all, is this worn-out arch ? I can bend even the mountains !"

> "As Rāma broke the bow of Lord Shiva its loud report thundered through the cosmos, its impact caused tremors through the earth along with its mountains, streams and rivers. It deafened the serpents ; all animate and inanimate beings along with the 'dikpāls' (the lords of directions) were thrown into utter confusion, the demon-king Rāvaṇa fell on his face, the aerial vehicles of gods, the sun and moon got locked into collision, Lord Brahmā and Shiva looked bewildered, (the holders of earth), vārāha (boar), Kachchhapa (tortoise) and the serpent-god all writhed in pain."

In this description of the breaking of the bow, the question that poses itself is, what forms the object (ālambana) of the sentiment of zeal ? If we look up the available books on poetics, we find that the object (ālambana) of martial zeal is the conquered. The conquered, of course, is the enemy or the hostile party. The conquered in this case could, therefore, be the bow alone. But it is difficult to understand how this inanimate thing lying on the ground could arouse the zeal of so many suitors to break or bend it ? The poor thing is incapable

of throwing a challenge. I, therefore, think that the object of zeal is the formidable or the challenging task itself.

We conclude this topic with an illustration of the 'fantastic' Hanumān, holding aloft the mountain in his hand, and forging ahead on his aerial course with unprecedented speed :

> "Hanumān uprooted the huge mountain and left immediately without any further loss of time. As he flew across the sky he put air-god, the (human) mind and the king of aves (garuḍa) to shame (by his terrible speed). Words fail me in my search for a parallel to describe the flight. It looked as if the mountain left a blazing trail as it was swept across the skies."[1]

In this passage the expressions 'the air-god', 'the mind' and 'the king of aves' lack a logical sequence. The human mind should appear at the end, because after mentioning the speed of 'mental flight', the speed of acquila, or the king of aves, becomes meaningless. But the overall picture that presents itself is undoubtedly a glaring example of the 'fantastic'. The trail of the moving mountain in the skies is no ordinary phenomenon. The beauty of the passage lies in this fantastic image which has been worked out on the basis of a natural phenomenon which reflects the poet's keen observation of nature. A very fast-moving object leaves a trail behind, and this phenomenon has captured the poet's attention. How could one be a poet if these small things were to escape his attention ? A genuine poet's eyes should be open to the myriad forms of nature ; his ears should be ever-eager to hear the melody of nature ; and he should have an open heart to receive all worthwhile impressions. Through the portrayal of this object (ālambana) of the fantastic sentiment, the poet has given sufficient evidence of his natural gift of identifying himself with any worldly phenomenon. And here he is unique amongst Hindí poets. As compared with this natural description of the fantastic, artificial descriptions—such as 'there is a plantain tree on a lotus flower, a pond on the plantain tree, the lunar disc on the cronch-shell' conjured by rhetorical poets—are just like

1. *Kavitāvalī*, 6.54.

a child's play. They would entertain only children or men of childish taste.

Gōswamî Tulasîdāsa gives ample evidence of his refined taste in the discreet use of the figures of speech. In the episode relating to the 'Fire of Laṅkā' where Hanumān brandishes his long flaming tail around, the figures of 'fancy' and 'doubt' are based on a natural phenomenon :

> "The huge tail with its bursting flames looks as if the 'death-god' has projected his tongue to swallow the town of Laṅkā, or it seems like a band of comets filled into the skies, or else like heroism unsheathing and brandishing its sword."

Tulasîdāsa's independent expressions of even minor transient emotions are so charming that they speak volumes of his keen observation of human nature. He depicts some such emotions as had never attracted the attention of other poets since they do not find mention in the list of 'transient emotions'. How, then, could the attention of lesser poets be directed towards them ? Rāma comes to know of his people's views about Sîtā through his intelligence staff.

Rāma, the unswerving champion of decorum and dignity, exiled Sîtā to the forest at popular behest. With tears flowing down his eyes Lakshmaṇa is on his way back after leaving her at Vālmîki's hermitage. On this tragic occasion how natural is the feeling of resignation expressed by Sîtā :

> "O dear compassionate Lakshmaṇa ! don't forget (me) altogether. As a part of the ruler's duty, maintain me like other ascetics in the forest. Sîtā's words brought tears to every eye."

The feeling of resignation that forms part of the general poetic pattern is really expressive of sorrow—in fact, it is not resignation at all in the true sense. One could take it as a momentary mental inertia born of despondency, or any such mental state. The same sense of resignation found apt expression in the words of Mantharā when she persuaded Kaikēyî to act before it was too late. When Kaikēyî rebuked Mantharā for her inauspicious utterance on the occasion of Rāma's

coronation, she says:

"I too now will speak just to please you and flatter,
Or else I'll keep silent and stop all my chatter."

(*Atkins*)

Amongst the Hindi poets, who else but a poet of Tulasî's keen sensibilities could dive so deep? And who else could improvise that subtle sentiment in such an appropriate character at the most appropriate time? Sûradāsa gave a mere glimpse of this sentiment in Yashōdā's message sent to Dēvakî after Krishṇa had left for Mathurā:

"Convey this message to Dēvakî,
I am a mere nurse to your son, be ever kind to me!"

Poets make use of the sense of 'wonder' to arrive at the 'fantastic' sentiment with its elements of curiosity. There is, however, yet another allied but less intense emotion which, in the absence of a better name, we designate as 'surprise' and may classify it as an auxiliary to wonder. Western psychologists make a clear distinction between 'wonder' and 'surprise'. While 'wonder' for them presupposes something fantastic, something that does not normally happen, 'surprise' results from something which we might not have thought of, something that has an element of suddenness. If, for instance, one were suddenly to run into a friend living in a far-off country, it would cause a 'surprise'. The news of Rāma having built a bridge across the ocean comes as a surprise to Rāvaṇa:

"Is it true he has bridged the great ocean, the Lord
Of all rivers and streams flowing to it?
The treas'ry of waters, of floods, clouds and down falls!
The Ocean bridged! How could he do it?" (*Atkins*)

It is just like making a surprised enquiry, for example, on the receipt of the news of sudden death: "who? Rāmprasād's father? Mātāprasād's son? Shivaprasād's brother? The manager of such-and-such estate?" and the like. The depiction of this sentiment shows that the poet visualised all these in his own imagination and did not depend merely on illustrative descriptions given in technical books.

We usually see people having a dig at others, but have you ever paid heed to that critical mental state when a man ridicules himself out of remorse and self-condemnation. Tulasîdāsa's deep insight has beautifully conceived of that state of mind. Rāma runs about from one forest to another, lamenting over the loss of his golden Sîtā for the sake of the golden deer. On sighting him, the deer run away and, as is their wont, stand at a distance. Rāma's utterance in this context is remarkable :

> "When the male deer runs off, seeing me coming near,
> Then his mate cries out to him, you have nothing to fear !
> Be you thankful, a poor common deer you were born,
> They a golden deer seek, such as you they would scorn."
>
> (*Atkins*)

How intense is the self-deprecation implied !

That which deserves attention in this context is the fact that the poet here refers to the fear of the male deer alone. Why have the female deer been left out ? The answer is that the rules of the game do not permit an attack on the female deer. This fact, well known to all the lovers of sport, reflects the poet's deep knowledge of the ways of the world.

Let us now see with what exquisite tenderness the poet has expressed the feeling of 'exertion'. Sîtā is traversing the forest along with Rāma and Lakshmaṇa on foot :

> "Sîtā had walked (barely) two steps out of the town when tiny droplets of sweat started appearing on her forehead and her sweet lips got dried up. Then she asked : 'How far do we have to go still and where do you propose to build the straw-hut for our stay ?' The beloved's restlessness brought tears into Rāma's pretty eyes."
>
> Says Sîtā : "Lakshmaṇa is after all too young and has gone out to fetch water. Let us halt somewhere in the shade to wait for him. I shall wipe off your sweat and wash your heat-struck feet." Realising the beloved's tiredness, Rāma extracted the thorns from her feet for a long time. She was thrilled by his loving care, and her eyes were filled with tears.

How charming is this manifestation of a housewife's exertion ! The sentiment here, which appeals to the reader all by itself, is auxiliary to none.

I have two more points before I conclude this discussion. Just as poets chisel and refine their words to enrich their meaning and weave letters into an effective pattern, so also do they process events to devise effective situations. A sensitive poet is attracted towards an event, which by virtue of its natural character, has a greater emotional appeal than others. This selection follows two different courses : in the first case the selected event forms a part of the content, i.e. it is interwoven within the framework of the context, but in second case the selected event has only an affinity with the context—as in an allegory. Tulasîdāsa gives ample evidence of his innate sensitivity in both the cases.

The first course is adopted to depict a situation which entails a number of events, all of which are summed up in single comprehensive terms such as tyranny, humility, sorrow, happiness etc. The word tyranny, for example, could mean anything from admonition to beating, burning, putting women and children to death, and the like. Similarly, 'humility' may signify anything from lack of subsistence to going from door to door abegging, whinning for small favours, picketing at somebody's door shamelessly and so on. A poet of refined sensibilities picks out the most touching of these items and thereby conjures up the full situation.

This is Tulasîdāsa's characteristic method of expressing his own humility.

Standing in front of Rāma's door, he realises his own humbleness in these words :

> "Who is greater than Rāma ?, and who is smaller than I ?
> Who more excellent than Rāma ?, who more despicable than I ?"

The whole of *Vinayapatrikā* is replete with this theme—Rāma's greatness and Tulasî's nonentity. The sense of humility reaches its climax in Tulasîdāsa, the like of which we don't come across in any other devotee poet. It would be sheer waste of time to argue with those who, with their superficial

study of Tulasî's verse, affirm that he behaved like a beggar, that he would not move away even when pushed out, and that he was a great sycophant. What is regrettable is that we have scholars in our midst who consider such crude and superficial interpretations to be 'independent criticism'. In one particular context the poet says :

> "Most irritating are his countless acts of evil,
> Most fascinating is Tulasî's behaviour of utter shamelessness."

If one were to conclude from this that Tulasîdāsa was extremely shameless, well ! who could help ?

Tulasîdāsa is so convinced of his loyalty to the Master that on the strength thereof he starts taking some liberties and would sometimes go even to the extent of saying :

> "I had till now been devoting all my attention to your grace in spite of your indifference,
> But now I am unable to stand all these jeers and ridicules and will, therefore, expose you all round."

But he would never be so insolent as to say,

> "If I were to across the ocean of this world on the strength of my own deeds, then I not you, should assume the role of the Creator !"

In choosing appropriate symbols, Tulasîdāsa gives adequate proof of his understanding of the world around him. He has chosen the cuculus or the 'chātaka' and the 'fish' (mîna) as symbols of intense love. The allegorical utterances of the 'chātaka' in *Dōhāvalî* represent the essence of the devotee's passionate mood. The poet himself aspired to develop this quality of the chātaka and mîna all his life :

> "I want this boon from you, Oh ocean of grace !
> May I behave like the fish in the river of devotion to Rāma !"[1]

1. Translated from the Hindi original by Shrî Mahēndra Chaturvēdî,

15

Principal Sentiment in the Rāmacharitamānasa

PROF. NAGENDRA

There was a controversy among the ancient Indian theorists of literature about the validity of the question of the principal sentiment in a poem. Every poetic emotion, when it reaches a state of culmination and is converted into aesthetic bliss, is complete in itself: being independent and autonomous, it cannot be subservient to any other poetic sentiment. Since every aesthetic experience is perfect and self-sufficient, the question of the hierarchy of the principal and subordinate sentiments becomes irrelevant. This view, however, did not find favour with most of the leading critics who argued back to say that in full-length narrative poem depicting life in all its vicissitudes, the hierarchy in even constituent element of the poem is unmistakable. Just as in the sequence of a variety of events, there is one principal event in which all other events converge, and in a galaxy of *dramatis personae* there is one principal figure who directs and controls the movements of the story, so is there under several sub-streams of poetic emotions an undercurrent of a basic sentiment which feeds and is fed by these sub-currents. This is obviously the correct approach to the problem and has the sanction of the most eminent of

Sanskrit critics like Ānandawardhana and Abhinavagupta.

The distinctive characteristic or the decisive feature of the principal sentiments is its frequent recurrence throughout the narrative, its intermittent, if not incessant, flow through the entire expanse of the poem :

> "Of the various sentiments depicted in a narrative,
> The One that recurs frequently is the principal sentiment :
> The rest are subsidiary." (*Nātyashāstra*)

This primary characteristic is supported by a few others such as :

The principal sentiment represents the affective quality of the basic theme of the poem ; it is the cumulative experience of the total work of art.

And, finally, in a subjective poem it is the expression of the poet's basic experience, whereas in the case of an objective poem it represents a major trend in the hero's psychic make-up.

Before we set out to apply these determinants to define the principal sentiment of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, it is essential to answer another moot question in this context—viz., what exactly is the poetic genre of this work ? Is it an epic or a devotional poem ? There are substantial reasons obviously to look upon the *Mānasa* as an epic, and in that case its main theme is the life-story of Rāma, which is motivated by a high sense of morality and righteousness. Rāma's primary objective is to destroy evil and establish the higher moral values of life. The principal sentiment under these conditions is obviously the heroic sentiment based on an undaunted enthusiasm for the right and the righteous—an enthusiasm for the righteous conduct supported by humaneness, benevolence, and valour. It is on this account that Āchārya Rāmachandra Shukla has defined human welfare or the good of the people as the basic theme of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki that indeed is the theme. But the unhappy events in the concluding part of the great epic—such as the second exile of Sîtā, the entry of Sîtā into the abyss of the earth and Rāma's tragic end in the waters of the Sarayû change the affective tone, making pathos the principal sentiment. In the

Mānasa, however, Tulasîdāsa has expunged these episodes due to which the heroic sentiment predominates in the story from the beginning to the end.

But it is difficult to consider the *Rāmacharitamānasa* as an epic in the same sense as the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki. The *Mānasa* is the work of a devotional poet, of one who regards himself primarily a devotee rather than a poet :

"Altho' in fine language, the work of skilled poet
Of beauty has naught unless His name bestow it.
Tho' lacking in charm, tho' as poem none worse is,
Yet if Rāma's name studs the poor poet's verses.
Then wise men will listen and honour ascribe it,
And saints like the bee for its sweetness imbibe it."

He has no doubts that

"Fair jewels of love for the Lord here observing,
All good men its music will praise as deserving,
Void of all charms tho' my language itself be,
One charm to the world known is here ;
All men of good mind and of clearest discernment
Will think upon that and give ear."

and that essential quality is

"Yes, here is the name of Lord Rāma, the gracious,
the essence of scripture, most pure, efficacious."
(Bālakāṇḍa—preface)

When we regard the *Mānasa* as a devotional poem, the position is changed : the main theme in that case becomes Rāma's name, i.e. devotion to Rāma and not his magnanimous character. This magnanimous character of Rāma to which Vālmîki looked forward so keenly with a view to setting up a model of human conduct is the cherished ideal of Tulasîdāsa as well, but the basic approach has changed. The devotional poet cherishes it not because it sets up an ideal of human life, but because it liberates him from the bondage of human life.

This poem contains the life-story of Rāma which liberates the soul from the bonds of human life ! Thus, here Rāma is not just the subject or the hero of the drama—the man

who struggles against the demonic forces of life and passes through various kinds of psychic conditions—but becomes primarily the object of devotional sentiment. The subject here is the poet and through him the devotee who sings the glory of Rāma, not for the elevation of his worldly life but to seek deliverance from it. Quite naturally the underlying emotion here is devotion, and that determines the nature of the principal sentiment which cannot be anything but Bhakti or the feeling of devotion. All the other determinants of the principal sentiment—namely, frequent recurrence, affective quality of the basic theme and cumulative effect—can be applied to it without difficulty. Right from the invocative verses to the conclusion, the poet seeks for the grace of Rāma and announces over and over again that the final objective of all his poetic performance is the attainment of Bhakti—complete dedication—to Rāma, and the narrative ends with an elaborate discourse on the supremacy of the devotional sentiment.

Under the circumstances, how are we to determine the principal sentiment ? On the basis of the mental make-up of the hero or on that of the experience of the poet which has been communicated through the poem ? The answer of the literary theorist is clear : on the basis of the experience of the poet, which is undoubtedly Bhakti or the feeling of devotion. Therefore, there is no denying the fact that the principal sentiment in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is Bhakti.

This obviously poses quite a few problems. Does not the sublime personality of Rāma or his noble conduct make any contribution to the emotive pattern or the artistic appeal of the work ? Does the reader feel gratified or fulfilled merely by an identification with the poet's sentiment of devotion ? Any such admission will complicate the problem all the more, and the relevance of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* in the modern age may legitimately be questioned, because certainly the enlightened reader today does not study this classical work merely for the sake of having a devotional experience, nor can he have any fulfilment thereby. Tulasîdāsa has solved this problem by making his object of devotion an emblem of the noblest ideals and the highest human values. Besides the inherent divine qualities of Godhood, the object of devotion

here symbolises in his personality the finest human virtues—piety, valour and grace. In this way, Tulasîdāsa has given a broad moral basis to the feeling of devotion and linked it up with the fundamental values of life. By raising poetry far above the petty pursuits of mundane life on the one hand and linking Bhakti with the higher values of life on the other, Tulasîdāsa has brought about a revolution in the field of poetry and Bhakti both. His Bhakti is not just an emotion :

> "I sing the glory of Rāma,
> Which leads to the attainment of all the four objectives of life !"

By assigning a broad base to the devotional sentiment, Tulasîdāsa has effected a remarkable synthesis between the objective structure of the epic and the subjective art pattern of devotional poetry—which is unprecedented in world literature. The intensity with which he has championed its cause throughout leaves no doubt regarding the Supremacy of the devotional sentiment but this also is equally certain that Bhakti in the *Mānasa* is inspired by a zest for the ethical values of life. Explaining the emotive pattern of the *Mānasa* in technical terms of Indian Poetics, we could say that the poet is the subject[1] of the devotional sentiment, the object is Rāma, and his magnanimous conduct, being an attribute of the object,[2] is the stimulant.[3] Just as in the erotic sentiment the beauty and graceful behaviour of the object adds to the intensity of the basic emotion—love, and in the heroic sentiment the nobility of the cause stimulates the underlying emotion of valour, in the same way, in the context of the devotional sentiment, the qualities of piety, energy, and beauty and the noble deeds of the object contribute to the consummation of the aesthetic bliss.

All the aspects of Rāma's life—the sports of his childhood, the sobriety and restraint in his love, his deep sense of reverence for the parents and the preceptor, his sincere affection and gentle behaviour towards the younger members of the

1. Ashraya.
2. Alambana.
3. Uddipana,

family and his attendants, the various deeds of chivalry, an unflinching sense of public duty, his commitment towards the weak and the oppressed, and his generous behaviour towards the enemy—all these act as stimulants to the poet's devout love in the natural course. They serve not only as stimulants, but also impart a deep human import and a broad social basis to the devotional sentiment which is otherwise a personal experience primarily : the attributes of the object affect the resultant emotion also. Tulasîdāsa is a worshipper of the heroic, of the almighty God who is the saviour of humanity, which is why the devotional sentiment which permeates his epic is infused with the ideals of human welfare and is supported by healthy values of life. While the poetic sensibility of Vālmîki, as it passes through the various phases of Rāma's noble life, identifies itself with the hero's greatnesss, the poet in Tulasîdāsa goes a step further : after a full identification with the greatness of his hero, he ultimately merges his identity into the infinite personality of the hero who is the Supreme Being. Whereas the reader of Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa* enjoys a sense of elevation, the reader of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* has the more rarified experience of a complete dissolution of his elevated self. And, that explains the difference between the aesthetic sensibility of a sage and a devotee.

I have a feeling that there are two levels of aesthetic experience in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*—nay in all devotional poetry : one is the level of the fable or the story and the other of the poet's sensibility. At the level of the fable, the medium of aesthetic experience is Rāma's character whose dominant impulse determines the basic sentiment. The basic impulse in Rāma is sense of duty—the zest for righteous life which finally develops into a feeling of dedication to the service of humanity. His life is a heroic struggle for upholding live values. The underlying sentiment in this case is obviously the heroic sentiment. The other major traits of Rāma's personality are love, pathos and spiritual peace, all of which support the basic impulse, namely, the heroic sentiment. At the level of the story, the aesthetic experience of the reader is the result of his identification with these basic as well as auxiliary sentiments of Rāma. But at the level of the poet's sensibility, as I have

explained earlier, Rāma is the object and his life is the stimulant. Thus, the heroic sentiment, which develops in the fable supported by the erotic, the pathetic, and the peaceful moods, becomes a stimulant of the devotional sentiment. The circle of aesthetic experience in the case of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* starts with a feeling of zest for the higher values of life and is complete in the experience of a full and final dedication to God.

Here again the question arises : does the modern reader also take this full round ? Yes, the man of faith does ; but one who lacks faith and has no spiritual moanings stops short at the emotive appeal of the fable only—that is, he has his aesthetic consummation in the experience of righteous zest for the nobler values of life. In the context of devotional poetry this dichotomy of aesthetic experience seems to be inevitable in most cases and that's why the Sanskrit theorist whose conception of Rasa or aesthetic experience is based primarily on the philosophy of monism, has found it difficult to accept the validity of Bhakti Rasa.

16

Epic Element in the Rāmacharitamānasa

DR. SHAMBHU NATH SINGH

The *Rāmacharitamānasa* is a classical epic—the greatest of its kind written in Hindi. The loftiness and grandeur of the epic form is fully revealed in this work. From the Middle Ages down to the Modern Period, it is the only epic of Northern India which has the unique distinction of being accepted as a sacred book, and which has affected the perspective of the whole society. Its greatness could be measured from the fact that in spite of being an ornate epic, it has become more popular than the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki and the *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa and the other sacred texts of Northern India. Though an ornate epic, the *Mānasa,* like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* reflects the mind (Mānasa) of an extensive land and is not bound by time. We would discuss here the secret of this glory and the characteristics of an epic found in its poetic form.

The poetic form of the Mānasa

The first question about the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is whether it is a Mahākāvya or a Purāṇa. Replying to this query, some scholars have tried to prove that it is not a Mahākāvya at all but a Purāṇa or a Purāṇa-kāvya. To decide whether

it is a Purāṇa or not, we should see if it conforms to the requirements of a Purāṇa. The original meaning of 'Purāṇa' is 'an old legend'. The inclusion of the Purāṇa and the Itivṛtta in the category of Itihāsa (history) by the *Arthashāstra* of Kauṭilya proves that whereas the Itivṛtta signified a historical event, the Purāṇa stood for a mythical and legendary story. In the Brāhmaṇa texts, the Upaniṣads and Buddhistic literature, the word 'Puraṇa' as used in the sense of history and in many places both the words—'Itihasa' and 'Purāṇa'—are used together. Later on when the Purāṇic legends were compiled to be used as religious texts by the Brāhmaṇas, material regarding religious rites and observances, pilgrimages, worship, philosophy, and ethical lands was also added. Then the Purāṇas came to be regarded as evangelic literature. There are five essential characteristics of the 'Purāṇa' : 1. Sarga (Creation), 2. Pratisarga (Recreation), 3. Geneology of the Ṛṣis and Gods, 4. Description of Manvantara (division of time), and 5. Geneological account of royal dynasties. Thus, beginning with the account of creation, the Purāṇas also contain the history of many dynasties and monarchs. But that is not all, the Purāṇas are marked with encyclopaedic qualities as well as the characteristics of an ethical law-book.

It is apparent from the above discussion that a Purāṇa is very different from a poetic work in respect of its subject-matter, diction and purpose. The *Rāmacharitamānasa* does not contain any account of creation (sarga) and recreation (pratisarga) ; the divisions of time (manvantara), geneology of royal dynasties, laudation of religious observances and many other matters generally found in almost all the Purāṇas, have no place here. Leave aside the geneological accounts of the seers and the gods, it does not even contain the geneology of the dynasty of its hero. The arguments advanced to define the *Mānasa* as a Purāṇa are only illusory. It does not aim at depicting Rāma as the Supreme Being but shows that the Supreme Being (Brahma), manifesting Himself as Rāma, acts as a human being. Tulasî would have adopted the style of a philosophical text had he intended to portray Rāma as the Supreme Being. On the contrary, he has described Brahma as an incarnate human being. This is the reason why Tulasîdāsa

gives importance to the portrayal of the life of Rāma and the sublimity of his character. The following words make it clear that he wanted to compose a Kāvya or a Prabandha (epic), and not a Purāṇa :

> "If wise men will not with their favour endow it
> Then vain the endeavour and foolish the poet."
>
> (*Atkins*)

In these lines and also in stanzas 1-9, the poet has not only proclaimed that he is composing a Prabandha Kāvya but has also set forth the objective for his composition. Tulasî's poetry aims at accomplishing the good of mankind. According to him, true poetry is only that which leads to the welfare of all and which has perspicuity enough to compel even the worst critics to admire it :

> "A style clear and simple, theme lofty and fine,
> High honour from good men begets,
> When list'ning to such, one by nature a foe
> All his enmity quickly forgets." (*Atkins*)

The Rāmacharitamānasa as a Mahākāvya (epic)

It is clear from the above that the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is a Prabandha Kāvya. Now we shall discuss whether it is an epic or a narrative poem dealing with the complete life-history of a great individual or, again, a narrative depicting just one phase of the hero's life. Āchārya Rāmachandra Shukla has rather cursorily hinted at this point when he says that it is not quite relevant whether the poetical work of Tulasîdāsa is on the whole subjective or objective in character, because this question does not arise in regard to the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, a Prabandha Kāvya or a Mahākāvya, as a Prabandha Kāvya is always objective.[1] He has not, however, analysed the epic qualities of the *Mānasa* in any place. Among the Western scholars, Greaves has called it a national epic of the Hindûs. Dr. Rāmkumār Vermā remarks, "Tulasîdāsa has composed the story of Rāma in the from of

1. Achārya Rāmchandra Shukla : *Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa*, 7th Edition, Kāshî, 2008 A.V., pp. 75-76.

an epic in which the life with all its aspects is portrayed in totality."[1] Pt. Vijayānanda Tripāṭhî has briefly discussed the epic characteristics of the *Mānasa*, but his analysis is based on the narrow definition of the rhetoricians.[2] We shall, however, study the work on the basis of those eternal and universal qualities in the absence of which no composition can claim the lofty status of an epic—and by virtue of which no work can be deprived of the glory even though it may lack some of the traditional characteristics given in the books on poetics.

(*A*) *The great purpose and motivation*

Tulasî has himself set forth the objective of the *Mānasa* in the following words :

> "Tulasî is composing in popular speech the story of Rāma, as found in the Vedas, Purāṇas, scriptures and elsewhere, for his own delight."

The lines in Canto 1, Stanza 31, point out that Tulasîdāsa wrote the work for spiritual bliss, for self-realisation and for the removal of his ignorance. But, his approach makes it clear that he had the good of the world in his mind. Since the concept of his own spiritual bliss was not different from the happiness of all, the *Mānasa*, composed for self-gratification, is really meant for universal awakening and for the removal of darkness from the minds of the people. Expounding the aim of poetry, he says that true poetry is that which leads to the good of all and is praised even by the enemies (*Ibid.*, 1-14).

Inspired by a vision for universal beatitude, Tulasî eulogises the humanised form of Brahma, the Creator and the sustainer of the universe. The life of Rāma is presented by him in such a way that poetic art and universal good are combined into one. The poet classifies this two-fold purpose of his Kāvya in the first stanza of his invocation wherein he offers his prayers to Saraswatî and Gaṇēsha together. Saraswatî is the presiding deity of poetic art and Gaṇēsha of human welfare.

1. Dr. Rāmkumār Vermā, *Hindî Sāhitya Kā Alōchanātmaka Itihāsa*, 1st Edition, p. 470.
2. Mānasa Rajahamsa, Pt. Vijayānanda Tripāṭhî : *Mānasa Prasanga*, 4th Part, 1st Edition, p. 48.

In this way, the poet, at the very outset, has suggested that he would like to compose a Kāvya that will be endowed with poetic excellence, artistic appeal as well as universal good.

According to the rhetoricians, the aim of a Mahākāvya is the achievement of the fourfold objects of life. From this point of view the supreme aim of the *Mānasa* can be defined as Duty (Dharma) and Salvation (Mōksha). There could be nothing greater than Duty or service to humanity which is another name for devotion to Rāma as it not only brings enlightenment but also removes all ignorance. Tulasî has made Rāma explain in the concept of the highest type of Dharma (duty, religion) in the following words :

> "There is no duty equal to doing good to people,
> Nothing is meaner than inflicting pain on others."

Thus universal good or path of service is considered to be the supreme virtue in the *Mānasa.* The Supreme Being also incarnates Himself both for the protection of humanity and for the destruction of demonic forces. The greatest duty of the devotee, therefore, is to follow the ideal of service to others set by Rāma himself. Devotion to Rāma, according to Tulasî, is thus the easiest path (of religious practice)—surpassing Jnāna (knowledge), Yōga (meditation) and Vairāgya (renunciation). On this path of devotion, one could go ahead offering service to others, with the belief that the Supreme Being is the recipient of all service rendered by him.

According to Tulasî, the best form of devotion is the one which is based on firm faith in or deep reverence for the object of worship. He does not quite favour the form of worship based on erotic or even parental love. In this way while the moral order is not violated, a firm social system is established. That Tulasî has succeeded in his great mission is clear from the immense popularity of the *Mānasa.* According to Rāma Chandra Shukla, "the idea that true devotees are only those who are opposed to the values of life, have renounced the path of action and are mere ascetics could not take roots in Hindû society due to Tulasî's impact alone. It is established once more by Tulasîdāsa that people engaged in worldly activities, those who display great valour in the

battlefield to fight injustice, oppose all kinds of exploitation, are capable of forgiveness though possessed of great prowess, are endowed with fascinating qualities—charming personality and graceful conduct—are true to their friends, look after their subjects like their own progeny, follow the commands of their elders and remain modest in spite of great prosperity, display forebearance in calamity, are not only pleasant but also powerful symbols of Dharma and, as such, command universal faith and devotion."[1] Thus the supreme objective of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is the affirmation of faith, freedom from subjugation and establishment of an idealistic and universal concept of Dharma.

Like its objective, the motif of this great epic is equally magnificent. The basic inspiration behind the poem is faith in a humanised God, whose beauty, virtue and valour had overwhelmed the mind of Tulasîdāsa.

Metaphorically, Tulasî's mind is 'a lake filled with water of his Glory, from where emanates the poetic river of the *Mānasa*. This river spreads itself through the waves of love and joy in the minds of innumerable readers.'

It is clear from this metaphor that Tulasîdāsa composed the *Mānasa* not on account of any craving for material pleasures, fame, wealth and royal recognition but under the impact of a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. It is Rāma, the incarnation of Brahma, the destroyer of the demons, all-powerful, the most dutiful, who inspired Tulasîdāsa to sing His glory. The poet conceived of a character of such magnitude as Rāma, the saviour of mankind, who completely captured his imagination. Inspired by such a mighty character, Tulasîdāsa constructed the temple of the *Mānasa* and installed therein the idol of his beloved deity whom he ultimately transformed into a Universal God. The poem written under such overwhelming inspiration would naturally be a Mahākāvya. Rabîndra Nāth Tagōre rightly says, "Poets of this era start writing an epic the moment the idea comes in their mind as if they have had a contract with the Goddess of Learning. With the ancient poets this was not so."

1. Rāma Chandra Shukla : *Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa*, 7th Edition, p. 37.

(*B*) *Great poetic genius*

Along with a great objective and powerful inspiration, what is needed for the composition of a Mahākāvya is poetic talent of the highest order. Poetic talent breathes life into the epic whereas craftsmanship can only impart form and embellishment. Tulasî's forte was obviously poetic talent rather than craftsmanship. He did not give so much importance to laboured ornamentation and artistry as to spontaneous expression of natural emotions. It is apparent from the *Mānasa* that Tulasîdāsa was well acquainted with the different forms of poetic art, and had adequate knowledge of poetics, but he did not make a display of his scholarship. This really is the mark of a great genius.

A special feature of Tulasîdāsa's poetic genius is his capacity for assimilation and rejection. Ordinary poetry can be written on the basis of knowledge and through practice but great poetry is the result of great inspiration and intuition combined with a proper sense of discrimination.

Tulasîdāsa has evinced his discriminating insight in the weaving of the plot, arrangement of various incidents, presentation of dialogues, thoughts and sentiments. His plot has its origin in Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa* but his approach is deeply influenced by the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.* He has borrowed many episodes from some other texts also and enriched his thought-content through the study of the Vēdas, Purāṇas and other scriptures. Shunning all hesitation, he assimilated into his work all those concepts which suited his design. That is why the *Mānasa,* though a work of poetry, has assumed the role of a religious text.

The talent of the author of the *Mānasa* is most remarkably reflected in his faculty of co-ordination. All high-souled men, inspired as they are by the great ideals of human welfare and universal good, are devoid of narrowness. Tulasîdāsa was a man of liberal views and believed in the establishment of a strong social order by bringing together the scattered energies of the nation through a proper co-ordination of conflicting views and ways of life. Of all the Hindi poets Tulasîdāsa is most abundantly endowed with this power of synthesis. In the

words of Āchārya Hazārî Prasād Dwivēdî : "Throughout the *Rāmacharitamānasa* there is a synthesis not only of wordly wisdom and scriptural mandates but also of asceticism and domestic life, devotion and knowledge, spoken language and Sanskrit, the Absolute and the Qualified Brahma, mythology (Purāṇa) and poetry, emotion and detachment, virtue and vice. Here is an effort to strike a balance between the extremes of all kinds." He has chosen the character of Rāma as the basis for this great synthesis. This assimilating faculty of Tulasîdāsa is the root cause of the greatness of the *Mānasa*.

(*C*) *Its magnitude and profundity*

The magnitude, profundity, and loftiness desired in a Mahākāvya are amply evident in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. The values and ideals of life set forth in this work are universal and eternal. On account of the intellectual height of the poet and the greatness of the characters, the *Mānasa* is pervaded with a loftiness, vying with the glorious peaks of the Himalayas. His pursuit of truth, the depth of his philosophical speculations, an ardent desire for the good of all and for the destruction of evil have imparted such greatness to the *Mānasa* that it can be easily counted among the best epic poems of the world. From the artistic point of view the introductory and the concluding portions of the work are, it is often said, didactic in nature and unnecessary for the plot. Such objections cannot be considered valid beyond a certain limit, if poetic art is designed to achieve the highest objectives of life and the dictum 'art for arts' sake' is not accepted as the ultimate principle. In reality, these verses have to a great extent contributed to the glory of the work. There is a popular saying that one who has fully comprehended the import of the beginning of Bālakāṇḍa and the conclusion of Uttara-kāṇḍa is indeed a seer. The values of life propounded in the *Mānasa* have found expression in two ways : in philosophical disquisitions and analyses and, secondly, in the portrayals of characters. Both are equally important, and the blending of the two has lent a tone of high seriousness to the Mahākāvya. It is hard to imagine the *Mānasa* without its introduction and conclusion. They contain its very essence and have a genuine appeal for thinkers. For the general

public, for the man of the world, the values of life are propounded through the plot and characters.

Tulasîdāsa, who was not only a poet but also a philosopher, has presented his philosophical views in a poetic style. He has rendered subtle philosophical and spiritual concepts in so simple and unadorned a language that they can be comprehended by all : the difference between knowledge and devotion in the seventh canto and the significance of the name of Rāma and his life-story in the first canto can be quoted as examples.

The *Mānasa* possesses depth along with loftiness ; it is a deep sea of devotion. Love, valour, compassion, forgiveness, generosity and sense of duty are just like waves appearing on the surface of a deep sea. Mahātmā Gāndhî unveiling the secret of this profundity of the *Mānasa* says, "Tulasî's faith was supernatural. His faith has bestowed on the Hindû world a jewel in the form of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* It is a scholarly work but scholarship loses all weight against the impact of devotion. Faith and intellect have diverse spheres. Faith enhances internal knowledge, knowledge of the self and leads to self-purification. Intellect increases external knowledge, knowledge of the world but has no effect whatever on internal purification.... The question as to how one could cultivate such faith finds an answer in the *Gîtā* or the *Rāmacharitamānasa.*" Mahātmā Gāndhî has underlined the importance of faith as a means of self-purification, but to the common man faith is the guiding factor in day-to-day life. The ideal of faith depicted in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is linked with love and service. Thus, the magnificent poetic palace of Tulasîdāsa's is built on the strong foundations of faith, love and service. The *Mānasa* is an edifice of universal beatitude.

Along with faith and devotion, the sentiments of love and valour also occupy an important place in the *Mānasa.* Here Rāma never gives a bizarre display of love as he believes more in action than in speech. The backbone of the story is Rāma's deep and serene love that finds expression in various forms, such as reverence for teachers, conjugal love, friendship, affection for the devotees and younger ones. This emotion of love is the propelling force and the very foundation of faith and

devotion as well as a source of inspiration underlying all valiant deeds. The blending of these three emotions—love, valour, and faith—have imparted to this work a depth which is found only in the highest type of an epic.

Like the profundity of thought and intellectual content and the universality of emotions, grandeur also is one of the essential features of the epic. According to Abercrombie, an epic represents the basic values of a particular age, has one or more such characters as personify the virtues or vices of that period.

The hero of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* and other supporting characters symbolise the highest values and ideals of life in the medieval age. Similarly, all the sins and vices of human character are depicted through Rāvaṇa and other demons. In fact, in Rāma's story, one can perceive the universal and the eternal concepts of the good and the evil. The portrayal of a constant strife between the good and the evil and the complete victory of the good over the evil depicted in the *Mānasa* occurs nowhere so prominently except in the great work of Vālmîki. Like a seer, Tulasîdāsa had dreamt of an India idealised in the kingdom of Rāma (Rāmarājya) which remains even today the cherished ideal of the present day Indian leaders. Through his transcendental vision he has conceived of the universalised personality of Rāma, with his head touching the heavens and his feet firmly set on the earth.

(*D*) *Great action* : *portrayal of life in its fullness*

In conformity with the magnanimity of its purpose, the main event of an epic is also glorious In the *Rāmacharitamānasa* the main event is the establishment of an ideal kingdom —the Rāmarājya. Tulasîdāsa has concluded the story with the coronation ceremony of Rāma after the assassination of Rāvaṇa. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki and the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* as well, after Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa, the story takes another turn and describes Sîtā's exile, Ashvamedha sacrifice, a second test of Sîtā's chastity, and Rāma's ascent to heaven along with his brothers. In the Padma Purāṇa, Sîtā is brought before Rāma by Vālmîki, Rāma receives her back without any further test of her chastity, and Rāma and Sîtā

both enjoy royal pleasures together for a long time. Bhavabhûti's *Uttararāmachārita* also has a happy ending like the Padma Purāṇa, though it contains the event of the test of Sîtā's chastity. Tulasîdāsa has not described these tragic events of Rāma's life. Having portrayed Sîtā as the mother of the universe and an incarnation of Lakshmî, it was not compatible with his objective to describe her agony in the second exile and further humiliation by the second test of her chastity. Tulasîdāsa's aim was to establish the victory of the good over the evil; the ideal of Rāmarājya—of universal beatitude—emerges in its full glory after Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa which is stabilised by the establishment of an ideal kingdom. The grand arrangement of various events in the *Mānasa* leads to the achievement of this end : the breaking of the bow, Rāma's marriage and exile, abduction of Sîtā, assassination of Bāli, construction of the bridge, burning of Laṅkā, the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa and the defeat of Rāvaṇa—all these events have their natural culmination in the establishment of an ideal kingdom by Rāma.

Here the most important event is obviously the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa and the assassination of Rāvaṇa. In Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as in the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, it is stated that under the oppression of Rāvaṇa the mother earth and the gods requested Viṣṇu to incarnate as Rāma. In the *Rāmacharitamānasa* also the agony of mankind on account of Rāvaṇa's oppression has been described as the main cause of Rāma's incarnation. The great battle fought to achieve this objective is, therefore, the greatest event in the epic story with its climax in the victory of the good over the evil.

(*E*) *Organic and powerful plot*

The main story opens with the 176th verse of the first canto with the description of the tyranny of Rāvaṇa and ends with the 53rd verse of the seventh canto after the depiction of the kingdom of Rāma, the concluding sermons preached by Him and the importance of the story. So, this main body alone should be taken into account while discussing the plot of the *Mānasa* because the first 175 verses and the concluding 77 verses constitute its introduction and conclusion and are not

directly related to the central plot. However, these extracts are not insignificant. They may not be important for the main plot but are of immense value from the view-point of the classical epic form, to which they impart magnanimity, vastness, and depth.

The plot that Tulasîdāsa has taken up for his poetic work has been very popular in Indian literature for a long time. It occurs not only in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Purāṇas but also in many dramas and epics leaving very little scope for innovations. Tulasîdāsa wanted to compose a poetical biography and as such he did not intend to take up only one aspect of Rāma's story as is done in some of the classical epics. Yet in comparison to the voluminous *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki, the *Mānasa* is not quite bulky. The reason, of course, is that in Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa* every event is described in detail with plenty of unnecessary subsidiary episodes, whereas the narrative in the *Mānasa* moves pretty fast. The episode relating to the performance of a sacrifice by Dasharatha for a son is, for instance, spread over 10 chapters in Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, whereas Tulasîdāsa describes the event only in two lines and then goes ahead with the description of Rāma's birth. Compared to the traditional inflated versions of the story of Rāma, the plot of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is quite compact and proportional.

The beginning, the middle and the end of the plot in the *Mānasa* are so arranged as to produce an artistic synthesis of its various constituents. The structure is fairly well-knit and every event has a cause-and-effect relationship with the preceding and the following events. Yet the invocations, the didactic and reflective verses scattered all over the work sometimes interrupt the flow of the story. For instance, during Rāma's exile, the dialogue between Rāma and Vālmîki obstructs the movement of the narrative though it is quite significant philosophically. A brief reference to Rāma's meeting with Vālmîki and his enquiry about a good place to stay during his exile would have been sufficient. In fact, whenever Rāma meets a saint or a devotee, Tulasîdāsa forgets all about the main story and gets involved in philosophical discussions.

Like the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*

also is divided into cantos, but Tulasîdāsa has not adopted the pattern of subdivision under smaller heads found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Tulasî's division is topic-wise. In the first part of the plot, the incidents starting with the birth of Rāma up to his exile are described. The second part deals with the visit of Rāma to the forest and the abduction of Sîtā by Rāvaṇa and the third with the assassination of Rāvaṇa and the establishment of the kingdom of Rāma. Thus, there is a planned development of the story in proper sequence which gives the whole work an organic form. As stated before, the action in the *Mānasa* culminates in the downfall of Rāvaṇa and the establishment of an ideal kingdom by Rāma. Every incident helps the narrative to move towards this goal. The identification of the main action with its final objective imparts a unity of action to the epic. The unity of action in a work of art is disturbed only when independent episodes are interwoven into the plot in a loose manner. In the *Mānasa*, except for the prologue and the epilogue, the main body of the plot does not have a single unwanted episode. All the secondary episodes—like the deliverance of Ahalyā, the killing of Tāṛakā, the hospitality of Shabarî, the miserable plight of Shûrpaṇakhā and Khara-Dûṣaṇa and the brave deeds of Hanumān—reveal, on the one side, the greatness and magnanimity of the hero and, on the other, the help received in accomplishing the main purpose of the poet. Most of these episodes reflect directly or indirectly the valour of the hero and his heroic efforts to remove the hurdles obstructing his progress to success. The movement of the story and the activity of the major characters impart a dramatic force to the work wherein all the five stages of development can be easily discerned.

(*F*) *The greatness of the hero and other major characters*

The most outstanding feature of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is the exemplary conduct of its main characters. Such a galaxy of ideal characters is difficult to find in any other epic of the world. The poet has drawn them with a definite purpose and according to plan, and as such they are all instrumental in the achievement of the goal which Tulasî had set before him. Due to the lofty stature of these characters, the *Mānasa* has become

a code of ideal conduct among the masses. Illiterate countrymen, ignorant of the literary eminence of Tulasîdāsa and the poetic value of the *Mānasa*, are familiar with the characters of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, Bharata, Hanumān, Sîtā, Dasharatha, Kaushalyā, Kaikēyî, Rāvaṇa, Vibhîṣaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa. People know these characters so intimately that they serve as yardsticks to judge the conduct of the members of society.

Āchārya Rāmachandra Shukla has classified the characters of the *Mānasa* into two categories : (i) Idealised and (ii) common or mixed. Among the idealised characters, both the extremes of virtue and vice are included. In this sense, the characters of Sîtā, Rāma, Bharata, Hanumān and Rāvaṇa are idealised characters and Dasharatha, Lakshmaṇa, Vibhîṣaṇa, Sugrîva, Kaikēyî etc. are common characters. The idealised characters are either purely virtuous or thoroughly vicious. There is no mixture of the good and the evil in them. Sîtā, Rāma, Bharata, Hanumān are idealised virtuous characters and in Rāvaṇā we have the extreme form of vice idealised.[1] Āchārya Shukla has categorised these characters on the basis of the three qualities of human nature : sattva (purity), rajasa (passion and activity), and tamasa (ignorance and vice). The analysis of a character is generally made from the psychological or ethical point of view. From the psychological point of view, no one is absolutely virtuous or vicious. Virtues and vices are mixed up in human character. Upbringing, education and environment affect the development of one's character and account for its rise and fall. Thus a natural or real character is that in which the course of development can be discerned.

Characterisation in the *Mānasa* does not conform to the norms laid down by Sanskrit rhetoricians. At the same time, Tulasîdāsa has not designed his characters on a psychological or realistic basis either. Since his attitude was tacitly religious and idealistic, he has created types rather than individuals. In the *Mānasa* every character represents a particular type displaying all its virtues and vices. The noble characters in the *Mānasa* are really superb.

Rāma is the hero. He personifies the sublime conception

1. Rāmachandra Shukla, *Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsa*, 7th edition, p. 126.

of the poet's creative genius. Rabîndranāth has characterised the hero of an epic in these words : "When a great personality emerges suddenly in the mind of the poet and comes to stay in his imaginative world, then inspired by his lofty ideas the poet creates a temple of language and installs him there...fascinated by the divinity of the idol installed in the temple and overwhelmed by his virtuous character, people from different directions come and bow down before him."[1] This definition is more applicable to the hero of the *Mānasa* than, perhaps, to any other epic character. According to his own conception, Tulasîdāsa has tried to present his Hero as the most excellent character of the universe. The character of Rāma is great and spotless. He is intelligent, virtuous, eloquent, handsome, victorious, powerful, and truthful. He is a saviour of mankind, talented, popular, well-versed in the Vēdas, saintly and judicious. In depth of character he is like a sea and in patience and fortitude like a snow-clad mountain. When angry he is like the fire of death and in forebearance like the mother earth. He can sacrifice everything, and in keeping his promise he is like Dharma himself.[2]

In the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, Rāma appears in three forms, i.e., as a Supreme Being, as an Ideal Man and as a man of the world. The devotee and the philosopher Tulasî depicts Rāma as the Supreme Being. The humanist Tulasî presents Rāma as an Ideal man, whereas the poet Tulasî depicts him as a worldly man, as a human being pure and simple which lends a psychological basis and aesthetic appeal to his characterisation. Just by describing him as a 'Dhîrōdātta' (exalted) Hero, all the aspects of his character are not properly revealed. Rāma is unboastful, merciful, determined, disciplined, and modest, but when the opportunity demands he does not hesitate to break the norms of ethics to punish the wicked.

Rāvaṇa is the antagonist, a foil to the hero. If Rāma is an embodiment of virtue and the saviour of Dharma, Rāvaṇa is an incarnation of vice. He is lusty, criminal and destructive. To destroy Rāvaṇa, the Supreme Being had to incarnate Himself. He was so brave and powerful that just playfully he had

1. Rabîndra Nāth, *Mēghanāda-badha* (Hindī Tran.), introduction, pp. 157-58.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

once lifted the mountain Kailāsha. By magnifying the tremendous strength, the unbounded valour, the supernatural heroism and destructive power of the antagonist, Tulasîdāsa wanted to emphasise the greatness and strength of his hero who could destroy such an opponent. All the qualities of the villain have been depicted at their height. He is sinful, vicious and haughty, fraudulent, cruel, ferocious, unstable and boastful. Just as the epithet Dhîrōdātta (exalted) is incapable of conveying all the virtues of Rāma, so is the word Dhîrōddhatta (vehement) incapable of covering all the vices of Rāvaṇa. As a matter of fact, Rāvaṇa, like Rāma, is not a common or realistic character but a mythically exaggerated superhuman being. In this way, the hero and the villain in the *Mānasa* are in their own ways the most powerful creations of poetic imagination. They are not real but symbolic of human virtues and vices respectively.

The other characters also, in their own places, are in no way less important. No two characters of the *Mānasa* are identical. It is difficult to come across a character like Bharata in the world literature. In his own way, he is a unique creation of Tulasîdāsa. Similarly, Lakshmaṇa, Hanumān, Aṅgada, Vibhîṣaṇa, Sugrîva, Dasharatha and Niṣāda are all significant characters.

Hanumān is another important character of the epic. He is endowed with supernatural valour. But with all his bravery, he is the sincerest votary of Rāma in whom he has almost a blind faith. In Hanumān the poet has effected a unique synthesis of supreme valour and selfless devotion. In Dasharatha also there is a similar blending of truth and affection. For the sake of truth he sends his son into exile and, then, for his son he gives up his life.

Among the female characters, the personality of Sîtā is by far the most exalted. In the *Mānasa* she is the incarnation of Lakshmî. Thus, she is the better half or the primordial power of Brahma. But Tulasîdāsa has not superimposed this divine character on the heroine of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. She has been depicted throughout as an ideal wife. In her character, all feminine virtues—simplicity, piety, innocence, sweetness, modesty, selflessness, self-control, and generosity—are amply evident. For this reason, she is considered to be the

supreme ideal of a Hindû wife. As a daughter, bride, wife, housewife and queen, in her moments of sorrow and joy, she always follows the norms of dignity and decorum. If Rāma is a complete man, Sîtā is a complete woman; if Rāma is Brahma, then Sîtā is the Primordial Energy. Among the remaining women characters of the *Mānasa*, Kaikēyî, Kaushalyā, Mandōdarî and Mantharā are the important ones. They represent various types of women. Kaushalyā represents the ideal of motherhood and Kaikēyî presents a true picture of a step-mother. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki, an attempt has been made to sublimate the character of Kaikēyî in the end, but the *Mānasa* does not depict such a transformation in her character. Though the main cause of Rāma's exile was the intrigue of the gods, Tulasîdāsa does not excuse Kaikēyî till the end. She has been depicted by Tulasî as a typical step-mother, who is jealous, selfish, unintelligent and short-sighted. In Mantharā is presented a realistic picture of a maid-servant.

Tulasîdāsa has shown great respect for Mandōdarî. On the one hand, she is devoted to her husband, and on the other, she realises without doubt the prowess and righteousness of Rāma and adheres to truth and morality. She gives proper advice to Rāvaṇa time and again, but he turns a deaf ear to her counsel. Even then Mandōdarî does not abandon Rāvaṇa as Vibhîṣaṇa does and the poet gives her due credit for this loyalty. Her character presents a mental conflict similar to that of Dasharatha.

(*G*) *The grand style*

In the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, Tulasîdāsa has given full expression to his highly cultivated personality. He has identified himself with the lofty character of Rāma, so that his personality is elevated to the level of the hero. Rāma is not only the hero of his poem but also the object of his devotion—an incarnation of the Supreme Being. These qualities of the hero—loftiness and divinity—imbibed by Tulasîdāsa in his own personality, are fully reflected in his style which teems with grandeur and purity.

(*H*) *Aesthetic quality*

There is no doubt that the aesthetic qualities of the

Mānasa are of a high order, but the question of the main sentiment is undoubtedly difficult to answer. Some scholars believe that it represents the heroic sentiment, others find in it an undercurrent of serenity, but most of the scholars consider it to be a work of devotional poetry—of Bhakti Rasa. From the view-point of the main plot, it is definitely an epic representing the heroic sentiment, because the main objective of its hero is to establish an ideal kingdom after killing his opponent. To accomplish this aim, he shows extreme prowess, patience, forebearance and valour. In Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma has been represented as a great, fearless and brave man. In the *Mānasa*, however, this heroic personality has become slightly subdued on account of his modesty and love for his devotees. Even then, in his life, heroic actions predominate, and in the end he kills Rāvaṇa, the conqueror of the world. After the death of Rāvana, the whole world comes under his domination. The atmosphere of terror caused by the tyranny of the demons vanishes from the earth and Rāma establishes a sovereign kingdom based on righteousness. Thus, if we exclude the first and the seventh cantos and some of the unnecessary episodes, the sermons, hymns and philosophical disquisitions scattered all over the book, the *Mānasa* would appear to be an epic fully depicting the heroic sentiment in all its forms.

But, the total effect of the *Mānasa* is not that of a heroic poem, and the reasons are also very clear. Tulasîdāsa himself has not designed it to be a heroic poem. His Rāma is not a mortal hero but the Supreme Being Himself; he is not only the hero of the epic but also the personal god of the poet. Most of the characters of the *Mānasa* are the devotees of Rāma; even Rāvaṇa adores Rāma as an enemy and after his death at the hands of Rāma his spirit enters into the body of Rāma. The real purpose of including the episodes of Shiva and Bhushuṇḍi in the main plot is to depict Rāma as the Supreme Being who loves His devotees. The poet himself at the beginning and at the end of the epic has described in detail the importance of Rāma-nāma and Rāma-bhakti through hymns, sermons and philosophical discourses. The motive of the incarnation of Rāma is not only the suppression of the tyranny of Rāvaṇa but also the fulfilment of the desire of Kashyapa-

Aditi and Manu-Shatarûpā to have him as their son, and the realisation of the course of Nārada and Bhṛgu. Thus, by creating a supernatural atmosphere around the personality of Rāma and interpreting it at a metaphysical level, the poet has infused into his poem an aesthetic experience which is very much different from the traditional aesthetic sentiments (Rasas) of the drama or the poetic narrative. This experience is obviously Bhakti. Why is it not the feeling of quietitude ?—Some scholars may argue. But the answer is clear. Quietitude is based on detachment, whereas this whole work is characterised by intense attachment. Thus, the underlying sentiment in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is Bhakti to a Sovereign Deity whose character has deeply influenced its poetic style.

The final and essential keynote of an epic is that it voices the spirit of the age and conforms to the need of the people to whom it is addressed. The *Rāmacharitāmānasa* satisfies this condition more than any other work of the medieval period. That is why, as Dr. Grierson has rightly remarked, it is more popular among the classes and masses of Hindû India than the Bible is among the Christians.[1]

1. Translated from the original in Hindi by Dr. I. N. Chaudhury.

17

Language of Tulasîdāsa

PROF. VIDYA NIWAS MISHRA

I propose to take up three aspects of the language of Tulasîdāsa:

(1) His language as a standard literary language of his period, which has stylistic variants in accordance with different forms and themes and which still continues to enrich and inspire Hindi poetry.

(2) His language as an effective vehicle of the contemporary Bhakti movement.

(3) His own ideas about the demands made on an effective poetic language.

I need not go into the details of the different regional styles, Avadhî, Braja and Bhōjapurî-Avadhî (which correspond to a certain extent to the three styles in Indian Architecture, the Nāgara, the Besara, and the Draviḍa) which he has used respectively to suit a particular poetic form,—Avadhî, for his epic verse, Braja for his lyrics and Bhōjapurî-tinged Avadhî, for his Maṅgala Kāvyas (meant to describe the auspicious marriage ceremonies of Pārvatî-Shiva and Sîtā-Rāma). I would confine myself to observations on the evolution of a literary standard language, reaching its peak in the poetic language of Tulasîdāsa.

This poetic language was meant to replace the literary

Apabhramsha, used in its different stylistic variations till the end of the 13th-14th centuries after Christ. Vidyāpati, Kabîra, Sûradāsa, and Mîrā spoke the same language which Tulasîdāsa spoke as a poet. The core vocabulary, the recurrent rhetoric patterns, the use of poetic conventions, and the balanced use of fresh Sanskrit loan words is the same in all these poets and others, because they all aimed at a larger audience much beyond their own dialectical region. In fact, they all addressed the same people, people who were embedded in a rich oral tradition and who could feel the freshness of the new note these poets were striking, people who could feel the new happening, so to say, in their world of aesthetic experience. Therefore, this one literary language is able to communicate to this whole mass of people. Had this potential of a broader communication not been there, the *Rāmacharitamānasa* of Tulasîdāsa could not have become a pan-Indian (at least a pan-North Indian) epic. The contribution of Tulasîdāsa is the greatest in this respect. He could see the potentials of the speech of the common people and draw as much as he needed from the literary tradition (the whole of it, so that he could freely borrow expressions from Sanskrit, Prākritas and Apabhramsha) without being pedantic; in other words, he could live the whole tradition preceding him and yet transcend it through his own new idiom. When he has to invoke different gods and goddesses to enable him to reach Rāma, he uses a high-flown language which is surcharged with Sanskrit diction and rhythm, but when he gets an opportunity, he uses a very direct and colloquial diction and a totally different rhythm which relies more on the length of vowels than on syllabic groupings as in his *Vinayapatrikā*. The reason for this transition is very clear. Tulasîdāsa's devotion is based on the acceptance of the Vēdic and the Purāṇic ideas and yet transcends them all; to him they are no longer goals, they are mere steps to reach Rāma.

His language has various modes capable enough of responding to his own poetic moods, but the total language is one; there is not much essential structural difference between the language of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* and that of *Vinayapatrikā*; one finds the same kind of wide range in both of them. Tulasîdāsa has evolved this language, as has been indicated

above, with a definite purpose. He has to give something to the lowliest, to the illiterate but receptive mass of people, so that the common man can regain a confidence in himself, and rediscover himself through the *Lîlā* (the happening of a cosmic event) of the Supreme Reality. He knows full well that if the scholastic tradition has to live, it has to be transferred to a new literary organism. So he effects a transfer of the Gîtā, the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavata Purāṇa so successfully that people who cannot see beyond these older texts stop and seek in Tulasîdāsa's poetry a translation of the older ideas—they are so easily led by the faithfulness of the rendering. But if one can go deep into it, he would find that Tulasîdāsa has harnessed the old tradition to achieve a new goal; he is in search of the potentials of the plains rather than of the high-peaked mountains, because the mountains ultimately break into streams flowing into these plains. The man sharing divine life with the gods was there and the mutual link between man and his goal was there even earlier, but Tulasîdāsa introduced a new compulsion, a new urge in the individual and the universal soul simultaneously. The highest reality gains a new significance through Nara-lîlā (human happening here and right now) and through its utter helplessness before a devotee who has given himself to him. The goal of Tulasîdāsa is therefore not a total surrender of Man to his God, but of God to his man. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that the scholastic tradition should melt in his poetry and mingle with the grass-root of folk culture. The great tradition has to give way to the little tradition and consequently a more flexible Hindi literary form has to be forged out of the rigid and stylised literary forms of Sanskrit and Apabhramsha.

The evolution of a new language is thus a sequence of the new aspirations of the Bhakti movement. What Tulasîdāsa has done to enrich this language can be summed up as follows :

1. He infused a new life in a rich but old language through the use of seemingly un-Poetic structures and idioms, breaking the conventions which lost their meaning, as in :

> "I had been licking the left-overs like a dog and was never satisfied !"

This enabled him to arouse the latent power in a familiar expression and also to awaken confidence in the minds of the common people who were feeling so insecure both physically and spiritually.

2. Tulasîdāsa, even at the cost of being considered a plagiarist made copious use of stock comparisons and stock metaphysical aphorisms only to make people feel at home with the high ideas accessible only to a few privileged people.

3. Tulasîdāsa's language has a broad spectrum; it could be both easily comprehensible and very deep, harsh-sounding and very sweet, very elaborate and very concise, loaded with Sanskrit and extremely colloquial.

A very conscientious artist, he knows his tools and knows how and where to use them. He knows how to break automation in language and how to surcharge a very common expression with a deep significance, which can be felt but not fully grasped like one's own image in a mirror :

> "Tho' your face you can see in the mirror you hold,
> You can't grasp; like that the great things he has told."
> (*Atkins*)

4. Tulasîdāsa arrays a set of synonyms in one sequence, surcharging each one of them with a different and particular significance. For example :

> "Viraha agini tanu tûla samîrā,
> Swāsa jarahi chhana māhiṅ sarîrā.
> Nayana sravahiṅ jalu nija hita lāgî,
> Jaraiṅ na pāva dēha virahāgî."

Here the use of *tanu*, *sarîrā*, and *dēha* to mean body sparks off a meaning of its own; *tanu* as a very delicate thing being consumed by the fire of separation, *sarîrā* as a perishable thing, and *dēha* as a fortress which contains the fire.

5. Tulasîdāsa has effortlessly used pregrounding as a powerful instrument, e.g.

"Fourteen years the full-moon day, his faith the pole star,
Thoughts of Rāma the Milky Way stretching afar."

(*Atkins*)

He compares the unshaken belief in the time-limit of the exile, i.e. fourteen years, to the full-moon night and infinite memories of the Lord to the intertwined arrays of myriads of stars of the galaxy. Thus he aims at indicating the endless nature of belief and the multiplicity of memories mingled with one another.

6. Tulasîdāsa has successfully struggled against the incapacity of language to articulate a unique experience and has come out victorious through the use of inversion : "There is a compelling urge to say, and no sooner than it has been said, it becomes an insipid statement and all the flavour of what was to be said is lost." He speaks more about the impressions of the thing than about the thing itself. It is, therefore, natural (though seemingly incompatible with the usual concept of an epic poem dominated by one hero) that he should speak of Bharata more than he speaks of Rāma. Bharata is the unfathomable love of Rāma, so that nobody else but Rāma can comprehend him, but even he cannot depict Bharata. Since love for Rāma is a process which is ever renewing itself, how can that be put into words even by Rāma ? It is the Becoming of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is revealed in the Becoming, so that more importance has to be given to the Becoming than to the Being which is always there in the Becoming. Tulasîdāsa very appropriately compares Bharata with Rasa (a transformational process) and Rāma with Bhāva (a latent mode of consciousness). Thus apparently though Tulasîdāsa transgresses the prescriptions of the traditional poetics, he builds a new edifice through a new inversion of literary language, which enforces a new hierarchy in which Rasa fades into insignificance.

Tulasîdāsa is thus not only an architect of a new literary idiom but also a propounder of a new aesthetics—the aesthetics of God-surcharged humanism. He ushered in a new era of poetic expression where each word and its meaning derive their existence

from one indivisible name of Rāma. This *nāma* (noumen) is neither a verbal sign nor a signifier; it is the essence of one idea recurring in various versions of the tale of Rāma. This *nāma* runs through each and every line of Tulasîdāsa, his language thus attaining its fulfilment in echoing this one *nāma*, this one recurrent and living idea, Rāma.

18

Rhetoric Devices in the Rāmacharitamānasa

PROF. R. N. SRIVASTAVA

While discussing the difficulties encountered at the time of revaluating a classical work, more specifically Tulasîdāsa's *Rāmacharitamānasa* (henceforth, *Mānasa*), Dēvarāja, philosopher-critic of Hindi literature, makes many significant and interesting observations. He admits that the significance of classical literature for society lies in the fact that it helps invigorate the imaginative mind to create literature of a high order by cultivating and refinding one's literary taste and cultural sensibility. A society which is unable to evaluate its cultural treasures or provides value judgements based on erroneous presumptions cannot also channelise its sublime efforts in other potent spheres of culture. It is for this reason that he pleads for revaluating the *Mānasa* with a disinterested mind without fear or suspicion whether or not it is proved in the ultimate analysis to be a literary work par excellence.

In the case of the *Mānasa*, he finds three distinct obstacles which come in the way of unbiased critical judgement. In the first instance, it is its acknowledged mass popularity. Like the Bible in Europe, the *Mānasa* has been the source of social norm and ethical culture which have gone deep into the

social behaviour of the members of our speech community. Due to the oral form of its tradition it is accesssible even to the illiterate or semi-literate sections of our population. The second major obstacle is the unreserved pronouncement that came from the pen of a critic like Rāmachandra Shukla that Tulasî was the greatest poet of Hindi and that the *Mānasa* was a memorable event, unsurpassable in the history of our literary achievements. It is to be noted that besides Shukla and other native critics of Hindi literature, even indologists and critics of Indian literature in foreign countries such as Grierson, Jules Bloch, A. Bārānnikōv etc., acknowledged Tulasîdāsa as a literary glory of India and the *Mānasa* as transcending the spatio-temporal dimension of its influence. For example, Grierson considered Tulasîdāsa "a genius whose name will some-day be inserted by universal consent in the list of the great poets of the world; in the words of Jules Bloch, "Tulasîdāsa is the literary glory of India, one of the most worthy of attentive reading"; and, according to A. Bārānnikōv, he was a poet of human sensibility and creator of cultural reality par excellence. Apart from Tulasî's unrestricted public popularity and unreserv-ed avowal on the part of many readers of his being a great poet, the sectarian enthusiasm of the Hindi world in projecting the image of the poet to be the greatest amidst writers of other regional languages of India is considered to be the third obstacle in one's fair critical appraisal of the *Mānasa*.

In the face of all these challenges Dēvarāja tries to re-examine the poetic structure and verbal texture of the *Mānasa* and asserts that Tulasî might be considered a genius, but the *Mānasa* is not the greatest symbol of his creative sensitivity or literary ingenuity.

This conclusion is based on the close examination of some of the well-recognised basic elements of literature and of the epic as a literary genre and then on seeking the positive and negative elements of the *Mānasa* conforming to literary work. But literature, like every other product of creative energy, is never a close-ended finished product. The open-ended form is attested to by creative innovation in structure and texture of lite-rary work which transcends the defined limits of *genra specificity*. Historical facts of literary history suggest that broad literary

principles should be formulated from within the classical works which have survived the test of time and public. It is to this practice of looking from within the classical ideal that Boileau tends to suggest the following :

"When authors have been admired for a great number of centuries and have been scorned only by a few people with eccentric taste (for there will always be found depraved tastes) then not only is there temerity, there is madness in casting doubt on the merit of these writers. From the fact that you do not see the beauties in their writings you must not conclude that those beauties are not there, but that you are blind and that you have no taste. The bulk of mankind in the long run makes no mistake about works of the spirit. There is no longer any question nowadays as to whether Homer, Plato, Cicero, Virgil are remarkable men. It is a matter closed to dispute, for twenty centuries are agreed on it ; the question is to find out what it is that has made them admired by so many centuries ; and you must find a way to understand this or give up letters, for which you must believe that you have neither taste nor aptitude since you do not feel what all men have felt."

Those elements which have made the *Mānasa* admired by so many people for so many centuries are worth examining. One has to find the way why the bulk of mankind in the long run regarded it with approbation and why literary critics and indologists—native and foreign alike—considered the *Mānasa* an exemplary literary creation. What I suggest here is that a literary masterpiece like the *Mānasa* should be studied and examined from within its verbal encasement rather than, as Dēvarāja did, from above with certain tools of operation.

There is another factor which is often lost sight of when we take any great work of literature for our critical appraisal. A great literary work when actualised for verbal interaction in society should be viewed as an act in poetics, as well as, as an event in social institution. As an act in poetics, it reveals its intrinsic excellence while as an event in social institution it transforms human vision and restructures human life through its causal efficiency. In its second aspect, it is the rhetorical elements which are called to play in stylising the literary object. It is not enough for a critic to consider the intrinsic excellence

or exhaust the analyses of modes of expression employed by a writer to convey his aesthetic feeling or the perception of beauty. Equally important for a critic is to look those devices through which a writer gives significance to the work and seeks that causal efficiency which transforms human life.

The elements of poetics and rhetorics are, in a great work of literature, so mutually entangled that it becomes hard to separate their threads with surface examination. On the other hand, each period of literary history works out its own balance by assigning relative weightage to these elements. One witnesses, therefore, an extreme period of committed poetry, i.e. tendentious and pragmatic poetry (tendenzpoesie) and also a period of pure poetry where laying of any intentional palpable design on the work of art is considered extraneous to the intrinsic beauty inherent in the creation.

It is not true that tendentious elements invariably pollute the intrinsic excellence of art or degenerate the inherent beauty and become an obstacle to the perception of the objectified feeling. In a great work of art, rather, these become the life and blood that reshape and retransform the very nature of the intrinsic content. It is to this effect that Engles wrote to Minna Kautsky in November 1885 :

"I am by no means an opponent of tendentious, programmatic poetry (tendenzpoesie) as such. The father of tragedy, Aeschylus, and the father of comedy, Aristophanes, were both strong *Tendenzpoeten* no less than Dante and Cervantes ; and it is the finest element in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* that it is the first German political *Tendenzdrama*. The modern Russians and Norwegians, who produce excellent novels are all *Tendenzdichter*."

There may be a difference of opinion whether Tendenzroman means to glorify the social and committed views of the author or these views be allowed to remain hidden beneath the structure and texture of poesie. Lenin, for example, calls for the *Tendenzpoesie* without any inhibition and characterises literature as an instrument for struggle in social history. He wrote in 1905 :

"Literature must become party literature...Down with unpartician *litterateurs* ! Down with the Supermen of litera-

ture ! Literature must become a part of the general cause of the proletariat, 'a small cog and a small screw' in the social-democratic mechanism, one and indivisible—a mechanism set in motion by the entire conscious vanguard of the whole working class. Literature must become an integral part of the organised methodical and unified labours of the social-democratic party."

Contrary to this, though Engles by no means opposes the tendentious literature, nevertheless he believes that

"...the thesis must spring forth from the situation and action itself, without being explicitly displayed. I believe that there is no compulsion for the writer to put into the reader's hands the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he is depicting."

And based on this point of view, Engles gave his preference to Shakespeare over Schiller, and to Balzak over Zola.

If we consider what Tulasî has offered as literature it falls beyond doubt within the line of Lenin's approach. It is a *litterature engagee* with pronounced voice of Bhakti (devotion) in overt form. In fact, almost all the literary works of the Bhakti period, a period characterised, and acclaimed as golden age of Indian literature—are of this type. The question that still remains before the theoretician of literature is that if 'Tendenz' elements defile the aesthetic sensibility and if overtly displayed design befouls the artistic beauty, then what it is that makes Bhakti literature an unsurpassable feat of creative achievement and characterises the period as the golden age of literary pursuits ? If Tulasî's own voice is explicitly displayed in the *Mānasa* and his pronouncement and design are point-blank in glorifyng Rāma—facts which appear to pollute the aesthetic sensibility and degrade the artistic form—then what makes Tulasî the greatest poet in and the *Mānasa* a glory to Indian literature !

* * * *

I would like to argue below that art as an event in social institution gets its significance and vitality through its power of rhetoric. It is the rhetorical element which makes the communicative power of art realistic at a given time to a specific society, and at times even to transcend the spatio-temporal dimension.

Rhetoric is that branch of knowledge that studies how words work in affectation. It was employed earlier in close connection with those verbal devices which were employed to persuade judges in law courts or influence congregations in churches. It was, thus, defined as the faculty of discovering the potential instruments of persuasion in reference to any subject-matter whatever. Later its application got extended to the study of literature as an event of social importance. It was suggested that the curriculam in schools for verbal study be divided into grammar, logic and rhetoric. Logic or dialectic (a study in discourse structure) be studied under three sub-sections—invention, disposition and memory, and rhetoric should have broad categories of elocution and delivery. It was said that "elocution is the place of the flowers of rhetoric, pronunciation expiration of the odours." But all the time it was realised that as one cannot separate the expression (lexis) from the thought (noesis), it is not possible to disentangle the rhetoric elements from the dialectic constituents.

What modern linguists have been stressing about the inseparable unity of the signified and signifier entailed in the concept of verbal symbol has been explicity acknowledged by earlier writers. Tulasî himself has voiced this unity in the following words :

"Gira artha jala-bichi sama kahiyata bhinna na bhinna." 'Gira', i.e. the signifier, expression, form or lexis, and 'artha', i.e. the signified, content, import, or noesis are like water and waves and cannot be differentiated from each other. The very designation suggests that they are two distinct elements. However, they are so entangled and intermixed that it is not possible for human mind to conceive one in the absence of the other. Bradley, in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, also concurs in this view and expresses his opinion in the following explicit words :

"And this identity of content and form...is not accident ; it is of the essence of poetry and of all art in so far as it is art. Just as there is in music not sound on one side and a meaning on the other, but expressive sound, and if asked what is the meaning, you can only answer by pointing to the sounds ; just as in painting there is not a meaning plus paint but a meaning in paint, or significant paint, and no man can really express the

meaning in any other way than in paint, and in this paint ; so in a poem the true content and the true form neither exist nor can be imagined apart."

Similar is the dynamic relationship between dialectic and rhetoric. As the identity of content and form is not accident and as in a poem as a verbal art the true content and the true form of beauty neither exist nor can be imagined apart, one finds that when literature is viewed as an art in affectation (i.e. persuasion) the true discourse content (dialectic or logic) and the true rhetoric devices (style of adherence to arguments and its elocution, as well as delivery) cannot be strictly isolated.

A great work of art with a mass appeal seeking admiration from a great number of centuries and affecting a bulk of mankind in the long run attests always to the synthesis of the traditional folkways of expression and the devices which are sensitive to the innovative modes of new cultural traits. It is to this that Sydney Finkelstein, an exponent of sociology of music, intends to refer :

"The forms of music are a product of society....The validity of a musical form does not rest upon its 'purity' but upon the easy communication it offers, in its time, for stimulating ideas."

According to him, the greatness of Bach lies in the close synthesis between the inventive subtle voices and modes of current folk-songs. Correspondingly, the communicative intention in power of the *Mānasa* stems from Tulasî's endeavour to give folk rhetoric and the oral tradition of the popular ballad a written form with the estrangement between discourse dialectic and rhetoric persuasive aplomb.

Many evidences can be adduced in support of my thesis. But before we dwell upon these arguments, it is better to look into the literary milieu of the Bhakti cult in which Tulasî was born.

The voice of the Bhakti movement was grounded deep in the religious matrix tuned to mass culture. "It was a call for entry of millions of people into the cultural renaissance, mass upsurge and cultivation of new values free from class and creed. This voice of protest lifted literature to the level of life, set all laudable aspirations in motion and created a vision of the per-

fection of mankind. Saint poets of this golden medieval period tried to free people from the esoterism of Tantra and mystic experience of Yogîs and by doing so they expressed with rare sensitiveness the rich experience of living conditions of life and exteriorised with exceptional power of beauty the inner depth of human soul."

It is to be remembered that Bhakti movement was true to the very nature of oriental art where, in words of Maritain, "religion, not art, has lifted art to the level of life which is the very life of art, basically needed for its own truth and greatness and which is the life of symbols." Secondly, the work of art was always considered as being a means to a given end. Like Christian philosophy of art there was a belief in rhetoric that accepted the position "to teach, in order to instruct; to please, in order to hold and also assuredly, to move, in order to convince." Thus, literature of this period was grounded in religious matrix and was directed to move people in order to convince. As Tulasî was no exception to it, his epic *Mānasa* is both a work of artistic import and an expression of persuasive sermon. The ingenuity and greatness of Tulasî in creating the *Mānasa* lie in exploiting the folk-techniques of narrating an episode or the characteristic artistic devices employed in popular oral ballads as a means to persuasion, or, better say, as an affectation.

Tulasî wrote his epic in a language which by tradition was employed for narrative poems. He wrote his *Mānasa* in Awadhî not because he was by birth a native speaker of this language. He was also a great master of Braja Bhākhā in which he has composed many sutble songs. The choice and selection of a language—Awadhî or Braja—was also not dictated by the choice of Bhakti sects, Rāma Kāvya in Awadhî while Krishṇa-Kāvya in Braja, as is generally presumed. Tulasî wrote not only *Krishṇagîtāvalî* in Braja but also employed this language for composing his *Rāmagîtāvalî*.

It seems that there was then the traditional force of literary trend towards adopting Awadhî for narrative tales as is evident from *Mrigāvatî* of Kutaban and the *Padmāvata* of Malik Muhammad Jāyasî. Tulasî employed the Awadhî language for his Prabandha Kāvya—the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, and for all of his *Nibandha Kāvya—Jānakîmaṅgala, Pārvatîmuṅgala, Rāmalalā*

Nahachhû, but for lyrical *Muktaka Kāvya* like *Kavitāvalî*, *Dōhāvalî*, *Sagunavali*, *Rāmagîtāvalî*, *Krishnagîtāvalî*, *Vinayapatrikā*, *Vairāgyasandîpanî*, he adopted Brajabhākhā. He did not thus ignore the pressure of literary tradition in selecting the language conditioned by the choice of genre or art-form.

It is true that Tulasî makes explicit claims for writing in Bhākhā for the benefit of the common people :

Bhasa baddha karaba meiṅ sōî
Mōrē mana prabōdha jēhi hōî.
Or
Swāntah sukhāya Tulasî Raghunātha gāthā
Bhāṣa nibandha mati manjula mātanōti.
Or
Kā bhāsā kā sanskrit prēm chāhiyē sāncha
Kāma jō āvai kāmarî, kā lai karai kumācha.

But looking at the form and texture of his language, it becomes evident that it is not the spoken variant of Awadhî that he is employing. In fact, by emphasising the 'bhāsā' as his medium of expression he was merely stressing the fact that he is not composing his verse in Sanskrit—a language which was considered to be a most competent medium for writing grammar, drama and high-class poetry. However, it was against the force of this traditional norm that Tulasî has to plead :

Syāma surabhi paya visadi ati gunada karahiṅ saba pāna
Girā grāmya Siya Rāma jasa gāvahiṅ sunahiṅ sujāna.

Literary craftsmen and court poets of the early medieval period were carrying on the tradition of writing in Sanskrit. Tulasî exhibited his competence in composing certain verses in Sanskrit in the opening of each of the seven *Sōpānas* of the *Mānasa*, but as he was to bring his creation to the largest possible section of the society he preferred *Kāmarî* (rug) over *Kumācha*, giving the reason that it is the intrinsic quality of the poem (*paya*, milk) which is important rather than the outward appearance of the external container (*syama surabhi*—black cow).

Pt. Rāmchandra Shukla points out that there were two distinct types of narrative tales prevalent before the time of

Tulasî : (a) the literary form of epic narration, and (b) ballads of folk tradition. *Prithvîrāja Rāsō* is, according to him, the earliest recorded epic tale of the first category, while *Bîsaladeo Rāsō* exemplifies the first known creation of the second category. Ballads of folk tradition are meant for singing. Shukla even casts his doubt on labelling *Bîsaladēo Rāsō* as a Rasō-grantha and adds : "But when we find that it is not a literary creation but composed only for singing, the answer to the query becomes explicit." It was due to its musical facet—it had been sung for generations—that its language shows a flexible and variable form. But being in written form, its earlier structure is still preserved. Another ballad which became popular and spread all over the northern part of India is *Ālhā*. Although we do not find the true version of *Ālhā* in a written form yet one can hear its verses in each village of the Hindi-speaking region. This particular ballad was in fact composed for singing in mass rather than for personal reading, and hence its echo is still preserved in the heart of the common people and its tune is a stimulant for further addition to the subject-matter.

The ballad form must have been quite popular in the age of Tulasî. He accepted this ballad form of oral tradition and grounded his literary content in that format. He gave refinement to the folk tradition by his knowledge of the classics and scriptures and presented the epic tale in a written form. However, he tried to retain the basic structure and technique of the ballad meant to be sung. It is for this reason that we often encounter Tulasî's suggestion of the song-format in the *Mānasa* :

> Girā grāmya Siya Rāma jasa gāvahiṅ sunahiṅ sujāna
> Kavi kōvida asa hradaya vichārî
> Gāvahiṅ Hari guna kala-mala-hārî.
> Hari charita mānasa tuma gāvā
> Suni meiṅ nātha amita sukha pāvā.

It is true that it is only the format of the ballad form of oral poetry which Tulasî has schemetised beneath the epic tale of the *Mānasa* : otherwise it is not a result of on-the-spot creation for immediate performance. It is the written medium adopted by Tulasî that gives *Mānasa* a 'fixedness', syntactically

a more complex and semantically a more compact thought content and provides time for a more crafty use of word-play and more complicated matrix of metrical structure. The repetitive element of song-tale, the recurrent phenomenon of phrase formation, short-term memory restriction on sentence length, variability in the ungrammaticality of word formation, etc. that mark the texture of oral ballad-forms, as is evident in *Ālhā-Khanḍa* are not the characteristic features of the *Mānasa*. Nevertheless, the selection of the technique of narration, building up of the story, adopting the inter-sentential linear pattern, affectation mode of rhetoric principles, singing texture of the tale etc. can be said to be basically of oral ballad tradition.

At this point we must differentiate between the verbal devices which are constituents of rhetoric and those which are elements of poetics. Constituents of rhetoric are related primarily to elocution and delivery (i.e. mode of presentation for affectation) while elements of poetics are intrinsic properties of the message of the art-object. To take an example, when Tulasî says, 'gāvahiṅ sunahiṅ sujāna' the singing element falls within the mode of delivery. While emphasising all the time that he means his *Mānasa* to be 'sung', he, as a narrator of a tale, adopts a metrical composition to be read aloud for people. Rhetoric also deals with the study of practices and customs which bear the force of easy communication and circulation of writings in a society. Tulasî employed his techniques to this end by exploiting the traditional folkways of musical expression and synthesised it with the prescribed musical tones and metrical systems. He was never for the 'purity' of musical form : in fact, he combined the subtle voices with the contrapunctal elements of current folk song.

The intrinsic quality of voice-effects characteristic of poetics can be seen in his selection of words and syntagmatic relations he devises across phrases. For example :

Kaṅkana kiṅkina nûpura dhuni suni
Kahata Lakhana sana Rāma hradaya guni.

attests to the voice quality of Mādhurya while

Dēkhi chalē sanmukha kapi bhaṭṭā
Pralaya kāla kē janu ghana ghaṭṭā.

Jambuka nikara kaṭakkaṭa kaṭṭahi
Khāhi chhuāhi aghāhi ḍapaṭṭahi.
Kōṭinha runḍa munḍa bina dōllahi
Sîsa parē mahi jaya jaya bōllahi.

exhibits the voice quality suited to Ojas.

Similarly, one could differentiate between the dialogue structure of narrative tales and the dialogue component internal to the art object. One is more concerned with the outer encasement and mode of presentation or delivery of the literary message, while the other is the dynamic constituent of the art-object itself. In other words, one is the outer envelope which encapsulates the cognitive experience and describes events as occurrences with the voice of judgement from the teller's vantage point, while the other is a dialogical representation of an action in a figural sense where characters speak and participate in a purposeful action. The former rests on events static to the art-object and invariably falls back on the relation between reminiscenes. On the other hand, the latter type of dialogue takes its life from motoric experience and is directed towards unity of endeavour with an element of volition. The first type of dialogue structure is akin to rhetoric while the second type is more an element of poesy.

One gets in the *Mānasa* both types of dialogue structures. In fact, the very ingenuity of Tulasî's creative mind and contrived craft in the *Mānasa* shows his exemplary power in restructuring the conversational complex (samvāda gumpha) on both the planes—rhetoric as well as poetic. The conversational complex of the rhetoric type is manifested in the dialogues between Yājyavalkya-Bharadwāja, Kākabhusunḍi-Garuṛa, Shiva-Pārvatî and over and above, Tulasî (the addressor) and the Reader (the addressee). Tulasî himself admits that the flow of the blissful story of Rāma has been captured in a well-formed and thought-out format for conversation patterns which are four in number and which form a composite complex :

Suṭhi sundara samvāda vara virachē buddhi vichāri
Tēi yahi pāvana subhaga sara ghāṭa manōhara chāri.

The conversation constituents which characterise the

internal dynamism of art-object in figural speech exist in the *Mānasa* at points where the plot demands a dramatic action. Some of such well-noted conversations are between : Lakshmaṇa-Parashurāma, Kaikēyî-Mantharā, Kēvaṭa-Rāma, Aṅgada-Rāvaṇa.

The conversation complex of rhetoric type has a basic structure—first, doubt or suspicion in the mind of the addressee who frames his question, Who is Rāma ? If he is the ultimate Reality, why is he behaving like an ordinary human being ?, etc. Thus Bharadwāja puts his query in the following words :

Rāma kavana prabhu pûchhōṅ tōhîṅ
Kahiya bujhāi kripānidhi mōhî.
Eka Rāma avadhēsha kumārā
Tinha kara charita vidita sansārā.
Nāri viraha dukha lahēu apārā
Bhaēu rōsa rana rāvana mārā.
Prabhu sōi Rāma ki apara kōu jāhi japata tripurāri
Satya dhāma sarvaggya tumha kahau vivēka vichāri.
Brahma jō vyāpaka vikala aja akala anîhi abhēda
Sō ki dēha dhari hōi nara jāhi na jānata vēda.

So is the case with Garuṛa who finds it difficult to understand that he has to help a 'person' who is Almighty, or how Rāma who is revered by all can be helpless in being arrested by demons :

Vyāpaka brahma viraju bāgîsā
Māyā mōha parā paramîsā.
Sō avatāra sunēuṅ jaga māhîṅ
Dēkhēuṅ sō prabhava kachhu nāhîṅ.
Bhava bandhana tē chhooṭahiṅ nara japi jākara nāma
Sarva nisāchara bāṅdhēu nāgapāsa sōi Rāma.

It is in order to clear the doubts raised in the minds of the addressee, that an addressor (narrator of Rāma Kathā) tells the Rāma Kathā. Through the exemplification (Purāṇa) technique, the narrator not only resolves the contradictions or suspicions raised in the mind of the addressee but even leads the mind to the commitment to Bhakti. In the words of Pārvatî,

Nātha kripā mama gata sandēhā
Rāma charana upajēu nava nēhā.

and of Garuṛa,

Rāma charana nûtana rati bhaî
Māyā janita vipati saba gaî.

No such statement is made by Bharadwāja. In fact, he is the person who wants to hear Rāmakathā merely for his Bhakti. Similar is the case with Lord Shiva, who not for any doubt or suspicion but for the sake of Bhakti exhibits his eagerness to hear or sing Rāmakathā. This suggests that the main theme (or proposition) of this type of conversation is to convince or persuade people for Bhakti by way of accepting Rāmakathā without casting any aspersion or doubt about its authenticity or validity.

The main feature of this conversation complex is that it creates environment for Bhakti or provides a narrative encasement for the story. It makes Tulasî, the narrator, parallel to Shiva, Yājyavalkya and Kākabhushunḍi (the other Bhakta narrators) and puts the readers in the category of Pārvatî or Garuṛa with doubts and suspicions in their minds. Like Bharadwāja, he finds his inner satisfaction in hearing Rāmakathā where he himself is both the addressor (writer) and the addressee (reader), and it is for his own inner satisfaction, i.e. 'swāntah sukhāya', that he is composing the tale of Rāma. If Pārvatî or Garuṛa could have doubts in their minds any other common human mind can have them as well, but as their doubts were cleared and as they became committed to Bhakti, others should also have a mind receptive to Rāma Kathā. This unreserved devotion and a mind free from doubts and suspicions about Rāma Kathā is made a pre-condition for the aesthetic enjoyment of the work. Thus writes Tulasî :

Prabhu pada prîti na sāmujhi nîkî
Tinhahi kathā suni lāgahi phîkî.
Hari Hara pada rati mati na kutarakî
Tinha kahuṅ madhura kathā raghuvara kî.

All these conversation complexes have a theme with a unifying motif. These are, in fact, free type of themes and,

being so, they are more a part of the plot construction rather than elements of the story. (The free type of theme is that which is not the element of the kernel of the story ; contrary to this, the bound type of theme is that element without which the story does not proceed). Free types of themes are those variablcs of motif which are either motivated by rhetoric or are meant to animate the story with intrinsic excellence. A great and sensitive poet exploits both the motives in constructing the plot through compositional devices which make all creation pulsate with life.

To take an example from the free type of theme falling under the second category, i.e. poesy, we find that Mantharā tries to persuade Kaikēyî to a certain end. Whenever a theme is introduced, it immediately demands a motif for its occurrence. A motif is an element which infiltrates the perspective of the proposed theme and gives relevance to the action encased between two states of the situation—a state of pre-activity and a state of post-activity.

A state of pre-activity is that like everyone else, Kaikēyî was also in a happy state of mind at the time of preparation for the celebrations in which Rāma was to be given the status of Yuvarāja. And, therefore, when Mantharā tried to convince Kaikēyî that all is being done to the benefit of Rāma and that the King, Dasharatha, is also a party to this intrigue, she takes the argument as ill-motivated and rebukes her maid servant in such biting words :

Puni asa kabahuṅ kahasi gharaphōrî
Taba dhari jîbha kaḍāvauṅ tōrî.

She even notices Mantharā's ill-motivated drive, and Tulasî artistically reveals this not through words but through gestures made. The smile of Bharata's mother is a more powerful description of her character than the words in the rebuke :

Kānē khōrē koobērē kuṭila kuchālî jāni
Tiya vishēṣi puni chēri kahi Bharata mātu musukāni.

Mantharā musters all her persuasive and argumentative devices and, unperturbed by the initial rebukes, tries to play on the psyche of the addressee, i.e., she is simple-minded (rāura sarala

subhāva) as against the intriguing nature of the king (mati malîna muhaṅ mîṭha) and mother of Rāma (chatura gambhîra) who has kept the king under her influence (Rachi prapanchu bhûpahi apanāî), and as a mother of her own son, Bharata, she would be tortured and Bharata would be imprisoned. The motif of the theme gets realised and the post-activity is marked by a change in the state of Kaikēyî's mind :

Bahu bidhi chērihi ādaru dēî
Kōpabhavana gavanî Kaikēî.

The maidservant who was furiously hated gets a reward and the persuasion becomes effective in a form that the addressee begins to accept the reasons which she had earlier rejected vehemently.

A motif which brings the change in the state characterising the theme is dynamic as against those static themes which do not lead the action to a change in the situation. However, static themes are equally significant for a compositional technique in art-construction. Often the inherent features of a character or the immanent laws of human traits are creatively exposed by such static themes. It would be an area of interest to see and classify the variable (free) themes that have been employed by Tulasî in the *Mānasa* into dynamic and static, enactional and expository, resultative and choative, etc. in accordance with their due relevance in plot construction.

It is to be noted that the two types of conversation complex creates two distinct layers of plot construction—one is related to the vantage point of the narrator and is concerned primarily with Rāma Kathā and the other is of the mimesis type with a dialogical representation of an action of literary personae that lies within Rāma Kathā. Tulasî has ingeniously tried to make a composite whole by bringing some of the characters of the first layer into the second one. For example, Satî is made to appear on the scene when Rāma was passionately searching for Sîtā in the forest, and Garuṛa was called to cut the Nāgapāsha with which Rāma was made captive. But though these tender threads of connections are brought to integrate the two layers, they do not leave any suspicion in the mind of readers about the two distinct roles these layers play.

We have seen that Tulasî employed rhetoric devices on both the levels, but while these devices on the first layer are meant to argue for the authenticity of Rāma Kathā with a central motif that pleads for Bhakti, the devices that operate on the second layer are used internally to Rāma Kathā by the characters that are motivated by a motif which moves the events of the story or reveals intrinsically the human traits of the literary personae. The first type is also directed towards the reader of the *Mānasa* so that its authenticity and Bhakti motif be realised in their psyche, while the significance of rhetoric devices of the second type is directed to affect only the addressees who are literary characters, and not towards the readers. It is for this reason that readers find in the motif that drives Mantharā to employ the rhetoric devices in persuading Kaikēyî to change the flow of events, a genuine motivation ; nevertheless, they restrict it to the character of Mantharā and the internal flow of the story.

When the *Mānasa* is seen as a message from the writer (addressor) to the reader (addressee) independently of its form, one finds, like Karl Buhler, that it has a triadic relation. A message is simultaneously a symbol standing for something that objectively exists outside the two interlocutors, a symptom of something that is internal to the speaker and a signal which is directed towards the addressee. It is these three functions or relations that Eliot calls the three voices of poetry, the first voice (lyrical) where poet talks to himself, the second voice (epical) where the poet tells a tale and the third voice (dramatic) where the poet exhibits an action. All the three functions or voices exist in a given creation, and it is the relative importance or dominance of one or the other voice that determines the character of a work—whether it be accepted as a lyric epic or drama. But this genre classification imposed on a given piece of a literary work is motivated by the critic's convenience and must not come to obscure the study of the three distinct relations a literary work as a message calls for. Secondly, in a creative work, apart from the three functions or voices, a fourth function also exists. This is the role of the writer not as merely a common addressor but as a creative artist, i.e. artistic function. This role signifies the point of orientation of a speaker as an artist and is directed

towards the implied receiver of the message. In fact, this role permeates through all the three roles mentioned above and is the predominant tone of a message.

Literature as a message with a triadic relation and the *Mānasa* as a multi-layered realised act can be represented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively :

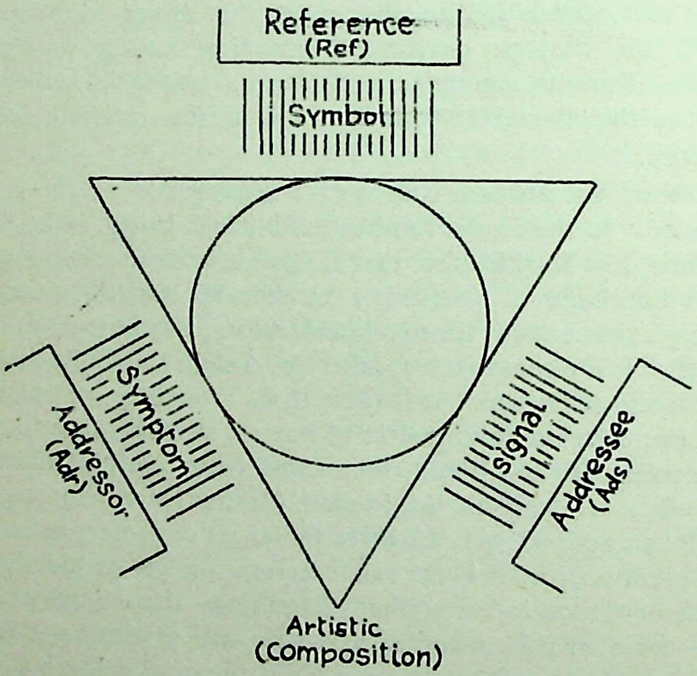

Fig.1

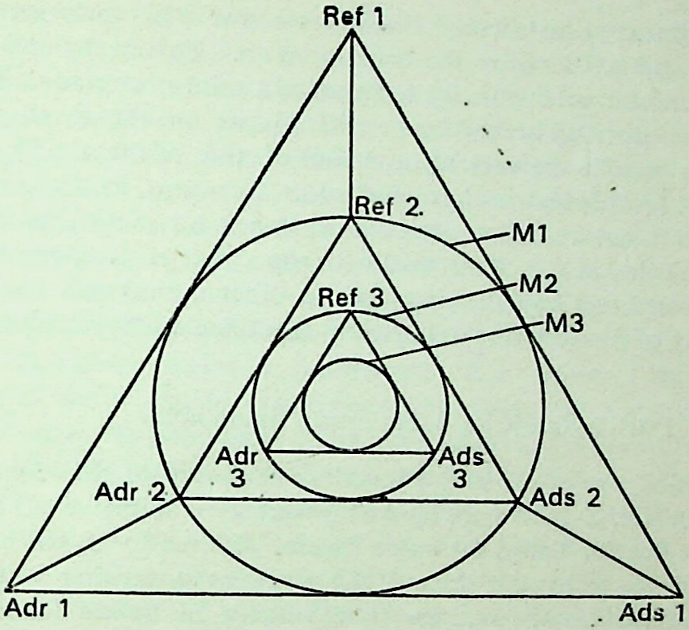

Fig. 2

We find that the compositional (artistic) technique for the message to be conveyed in the *Mānasa* has different layers—the outer envelope (triangle) captures the message where Adr-1 (Tulasî) is in immediate relation with his implied Ads-1 (reader), and in this role he is a saint-preacher who sings sermons and introduces didactive elements in a poetic form ; the intermediate layer is designed to capture the message where Tulasî comes in simulated immediate relation with his readers, i.e. the motivation behind the motif which characterises the message (M-2) being the same as M-1, Adr-2 (Yājyavalkya, Shiva, Kākabhusuṇḍi) is identified in the role with Adr-1 and the questions, doubts, suspicions raised by Ads-2 become recognisable states of mind presumed for Ads-1. At this layer, Tulasî as a simulated narrator discharges his role as a Vyāsa and tells a tale in a Purāṇa style. It is on the third layer that Tulasî as a creative writer permeates through the internal interlocutors (literary personae) where he presents his message in mediate relation to himself and his readers.

I would like to mention that Tulasî, like any poet of the medieval Bhakti period, was much concerned with the situatio-

nal context of his society. He was sensitive to his social environment and sufferings of the common man. Driven by the compassion of a noble humanist, Tulasî as a saint-poet made religion and his glorified hero Rāma to lift his art to the level of life, which became the very life and soul of the *Mānasa*. Thus, if at one level Rāma is characterised as Supreme Reality, amorphous in nature and continuum in essence, his contingent aspect is projected at the other level with rûpa, that is friendly to the oppressed section of the society (i.e. dînabandhu) and ferocious enemy of poverty (metaphorically identified with Rāvaṇa) ; for example :

Dārida dasānana dabāi dunî Dînabandhu

For him, one of the major functions of poetry, of the *Mānasa* or Rāma Kathā, is to fight against poverty, the source of all evils.

But for Tulasî art was a means ordered to a given end ; he wanted to exploit some of the practices governing not only the circulation of writings (like singing in ballad forms) but also the mode of presentation before the audience (like native stage forms) at a given time in the society. As a social reformer, he was fully aware of his social status and philosophy and, over and above, its critical sanction. He wanted his ideology to penetrate deep into society through a form which has potent power of easy communicability and societal sanction for its presentation.

Scholars report that there were organisations at the time of Tulasî which encouraged the reading and recitation of the *Mahābhārata*, Vālmîki's *Rāmayaṇa*, the *Purāṇa*, *Shrîmadbhāgavata* etc. It has been pointed out that in each village there were professional singers who recited some versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and even staged some episodes related to Rāma and Krishṇa in folk-tradition. Tulasî himself exploited these media for communicating his ideas. It is said that it was Tulasî who organised Rāmalîlā in the Kēdārakhaṇḍa of Vārāṇasî while he persuaded his friend, Mēgha Bhagata to stage in Kāshikhaṇḍa his version of the *Mānasa* (instead of Vālmîki's).

If one looks at the *Mānasa* from the point of view of its compositional texture, it becomes apparent that there is many a contrived locus in narration which is inherently marked for

dramatic action. The technique which Tulasî employs at these 'locus' events are more akin to conative function of a language suited best to drama. It is in the form of a dialogue complex that the characters are motivated for the display of an action ; the language style is made flexible and responds to the contextual register, proper address-forms are used to call attention, motifs are assimilated to drive the action ahead, etc. In Ayōdhyā Kāṇḍa itself, one notices no less than six such significant 'locus' events viz. Kaikēyî-Mantharā, Kaikēyî-Dasharatha, Rāma-Sîtā, Kēvaṭa-Rāma, Grāma-Vadhû, and Sabhā Samvāda (dialogue structure). The *Mānasa* offers many such 'locus' events which have the form and texture of dialogue structure potentially charged for dramatic performance. What I want to argue here is that Tulasî was conscious of exploiting these 'locus' events for Rāmalîlā and, in fact, gave much weightage to these against his role as a narrator who merely tells a tale. The structure of the *Mānasa* also suggests that Tulasî selected and wrote these 'locus' events with better craft and later stitched them through his narrative technique.

One of the major reasons for the success and mass-popularity of the classics, apart from the inner vision, ethical values, poetic excellence, etc., lies in their power of easy communicability. In information technology, for a message to be conveyed there should be 'channels' or 'contacts' between the addressor (transmitter) and the addressee (receiver). The corresponding linguistic function to this has been called Phatic by Jakobson. A Phatic function does not convey meaning or denotate objects but is employed to maintain the interaction. To my mind this can fruitfully be achieved only when the channel is free of any noise. Literature being also an event in social institution, the nature of the communicative channels is invariably conditioned by myth and taboos, aspirations and convictions, social norms and behavioural patterns characteristic of a given society. The rhetoric elements of a literature aiming at conation or affectation are always sensitive to these socially conditioned communicative channels. And Tulasî was the greatest master of rhetoric devices. He communicated his message on the channel, exploiting the myth and taboos, ethnic traits of our societies, people's aspirations and convictions, etc.

What has been argued above bears out our conclusion that the greatness of the *Mānasa* lies not in the fact that it is a religiously oriented creation or that it is in communion with invisible and adorable reality. In fact, as an act in literary creation and as an event in social institution, the *Mānasa* attempts to lift religion to the level of life, which is the very essence of literature. Tulasī, in his multi-layered creation, has devised such rhetorical devices and exploited such communicative channels that the *Mānasa* as a message convincingly goes deep into the heart of its readers, it convinces their 'intellect' and affects their 'sensibility'. In terms of information format it can be said that the *Mānasa* is a well-articulated message on a noise-free channel on a wave length suited most for the common man and is meant to persuade people. It is for this reason that poetic excellence has been made subservient to rhetoric needs and message-oriented artistic [devices bear constraints of connotation-contrived styles known as 'affectation'.

19

Poetic Principles of Tulasîdāsa

DR. NIRMALĀ JAIN

An enquiry into the poetic theory of Tulasîdāsa apparently seems to be paradoxical, as Tulasîdāsa was primarily a Saint-poet, a devotee of Lord Rāma and not a theorist of poetry. To him, poetry was a mere vehicle of devotion, but nevertheless he was a poet with deep learning and wide scholarship. On the one hand he declares that his work is based on various Purāṇas, Nigamas, and Āgamas and on the other, out of sheer modesty he states, "I have no poetic gift : I am writing on a blank paper indeed !" But when he says that he has no discrimination of the poetic craft and is only writing simple truths on blank papers, this modest statement does not really prove his ignorance of the poetic craft : it only evinces his primary concern for truth in life. It is this commitment to truth and to life and society which pervades the works of Tulasîdāsa.

For Tulasîdāsa, the symbol of the true, the good and the beautiful is Rāma. The entire universe is pervaded by Rāma and Sîtā, and therefore the path leading to Rāma goes through this world. Hence Tulasîdāsa's love of Rāma is synonymous with his love for the world around.

The social, ethical and moral overtones of his poetry can be understood and appreciated only in the light of this fact. In

places his works tend to become cumbersome and are devoid of poetic flavour on account of heavy philosophical and didactic undertones, but such occasions are not many. It is mostly in these statements that Tulasîdāsa's views on poetic theory are strewn here and there.

A number of scholars have made efforts off and on to enumerate his views on various theoretical problems—the problems that have generally been dealt with in the works of Sanskrit poetics. Although stray remarks or implied suggestions do not offer a subject for any serious or systematic study, it is equally true that there is hardly a subject which has not been touched on by Tulasîdāsa—directly or by implication.

His very concept of a poet manifests his attitude towards poetry. Unlike Kabîra, his poet is a knowledgeable, well-read person, a man of wide literary culture. In the very invocation of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* where Tulasîdāsa speaks "Of all the patterns of sound and sense, of sentiments and metrical compositions", he is obviously making a reference in technical terms to the various elements of poetry. It implies that a poet, when he undertakes the major task of writing an epic, has to be conversant with all the know-hows of the art.

This, however, does not mean that for Tulasîdāsa, craft was more important. As a matter of fact, when he refers to the objectives of poetry, he clearly states that any verbal expression worth the name is only the one which brings about general well-being as do the holy waters of the river Ganges. In the beginning of his epic the *Rāmacharitamānasa* he has humbly declared that he is relating the story of Rāma for personal gratification, but as one proceeds further it becomes evident that for Tulasîdāsa anything which is pleasant must be essentially virtuous. A work of literature, however artistic, is not desirable, if it is devoid of the name of Rāma. Rāma is not only a personal God for Tulasîdāsa, He is also an objective phenomenon, which is all-pervading. Therefore, the ultimate value of literature is the good of society, and not the pleasure of the individual.

Tulasîdāsa maintains that any verbal expression becomes meaningful only if it relates to the glory of Rāma. He has repeatedly mentioned a number of blessings accruing from

narrating or hearing the story of Rāma. Since for him poetry means devotional poetry, he implicitly claims that these are the gifts of poetry in general.

It automatically follows that Tulasîdāsa regarded the life-story of Rāma as the only proper subject of poetry. He has again and again emphasised the point that the personality of Rāma though beyond our sense perceptions, is yet the only proper subject of poetry. It is not a subject easy to comprehend, yet a real poet should always make an effort to imbibe it in his poetic creation. It was because of this emphasis on devotional poetry that Tulasîdāsa did not support any composition which eulogised ordinary men of the world. He goes a step further and condemns vehemently any effort to glorify those who are anti-Rāma. According to him, the speech which indulges in singing the glory of ordinary people ultimately repents. The remark was probably aimed at the compositions of court poets—or maybe at the poetic romances of the Sûfî poets. The desirability of an exclusive poetic theme of this sort has, however, been a subject of criticism among the later critics.

For Tulasîdāsa, Rāma was the Ideal Man who stood for all that was true and virtuous in life. Others, therefore, who had similar qualities,—such as the saints and the devotees of Rāma, etc.—were also acceptable to Tulasîdāsa as subjects of poetry. When he speaks of the impropriety of adopting the deeds of the common man (Prākritajana) as the theme of poetry, he is probably referring to themes which do not agree with the ideals of Rāma. That is precisely the reason why he does not mind singing the glories of Shiva and Krishṇa in his poetry. Otherwise, Tulasîdāsa's concept of Rāma-Kathā is all comprehensive; the story of Rāma, for him, has immense scope for providing all kinds of themes for literature.

His dedication to Rāma is so complete that he maintains that without the grace of God no one can be a poet. Therefore, when Tulasîdāsa regards the poetic genius as the basis of all real poetry, he obviously means natural, inborn genius, and not the poetic skill which one might cultivate as a result of constant training and practice. He believes that the natural talent of a poet is evoked by the grace of Rāma. A good work can

only be composed by virtue of true knowledge resulting from the meditation on 'Rāma Nāma' and by taking a plunge into the pool of Rāma's life-story. He, therefore, humbly submits that he has no claims to the title of a poet. He only sings the glory of Rāma according to his limited understanding or capacity. He also prays for the grace of Shiva and his spouse Pārvatî. The benedictory verse of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is addressed to the creator of the artistic content and form and to Gaṇēsha as the originator of the moral significance of poetry. Tulasîdāsa's faith is unbounded. He believes that when invoked by her devotees, the goddess Saraswatî leaves the kingdom of heaven and comes down to bless them. But, again, this happens only when there is an indication from Rāma Himself. It is He who makes the goddess of speech dance in the hearts of the devoted poets.

Tulasîdāsa has also expressed faith in the grace of the 'Guru'—the preceptor—as one of the causes of poetry. It is only through the blessings of a competent preceptor that one attains the capacity to discriminate and his heart is cleansed of all impurities. Tulasîdāsa has compared such a heart to a clean, gleaming mirror in which the reflection of the subject-image is perfect and spotless. In one place Tulasîdāsa has also referred to the religious discourses of the saints and the sages as sources of inspiration for a poetic composition. Listening to these tales may not bear instantaneous results but they settle down in the subconscious of the listener which bears fruit at an opportune moment.

Tulasîdāsa believed that a systematic study of the scriptures —the Vēdas, the Purāṇas and the Shāstras—contributes to the cultivation of poetic talent. A poet well-versed in the Shāstras acquires self-confidence and the essence of the knowledge thus acquired ultimately attains culmination in his works. He has also casually referred to the desirability of knowing the techniques of poetic craft, but evidently they do not occupy a place of importance in his poetic theory.

One of the reasons for his relative indifference to poetic craft may be that he has enunciated the organic theory of poetry while commenting on the word-meaning relationship. He has compared the inseparable relation of the two to that of water and waves. To him the relation of the content or the meaning to

the expression or the word is that of harmony, proportion and balance. Neither of the two is subordinate to or is dominated by the other. He mentions all the constituents of poetry with equal importance. The Rasas or the sentiments, the attributes and flaws of poetic style, poetic language and metre are equally important in his poetic system. Tulasîdāsa has elucidated the mutual relationship of the various constituents of poetry with the help of a metaphor. The basic elements of poetry are five—talent, emotion, intellect, imagination, and style. Shāradā stands for talent, ocean for heart, i.e. sentiment, rainwater for thought, shell for intellect or judgement, pearl for a piece of poetry, device for art and last but not the least the interwoven thread for the story of Rāma. The main element which holds all the others together, like a thread in a garland, is the story of Rāma.

In fact, Tulasîdāsa has not discussed at length any of the poetic theories. The intricate theoretical problems do not bother him. He only makes casual references or passes general comments on certain topics in particular context. He does not, for example, indulge in any detailed discussion about the total number of Rasas. By the time of Tulasîdāsa 'Bhakti' had been added to the list as the Supreme Rasa by Vaiṣṇava scholars. It seems that Tulasîdāsa was well aware of this fact and he too has accepted Bhakti Rasa in addition to the commonly accepted list of Rasas. In fact, his conception of Bhakti Rasa is so comprehensive that it engulfs all other sentiments depicted by him in his works.

In the same manner, Tulasîdāsa does not get involved in any theoretical discussion about 'Beauty', but 'Beauty' has found manifestation in varied forms in his works. He paints elaborate word-pictures of human-forms of Rāma, Sîtā, Pārvatî and others. His compositions abound in descriptions of natural beauty. Yet, in all these contexts he reaches a point where he has to confess his inability to capture the essence of Beauty in words. It appears that the ideal or the absolute Beauty for Tulasîdāsa is beyond words. It is super-mundane or mystic in character and is beyond sense-perceptions. Tulasîdāsa probably had a flare for ambiguity and for the suggestive power of the word, because he advoctaes this quality in speech also. He admires a speech which is beyond comprehension and illustrates his view by quoting the example of the reflection

of a face in the mirror. Though the beholder holds the mirror in his hand, yet the real beauty of the face is beyond his grasp.[1] In the same manner, an expression which suggests more than it states, which is ambiguous, more meaningful than it apparently seems, is the one that wins the approbation of Tulasîdāsa. He calls for brevity and demands of his fellow-poets the ability to infuse profound meaning in a few words. Along with brevity and suggestiveness he is also an advocate of lucidity in style.

Tulasîdāsa has not discussed the technicalities of the various genres of poetry, but there seems to be little doubt that he was a conformist in this respect and probably believed that certain forms are suitable for certain themes only. He has, therefore, deliberately experimented with all the current forms of poetry. For his major composition, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, he has adopted the epic structure, though not strictly in accordance with the norms laid down by theoreticians. *Pārvatî-Maṅgala, Gîtāvalî* and *Krishṇa Gîtāvalî* are fine specimens of lyrical poetry and *Dōhāvalî* is a collection of couplets—mostly didactic. *Kavitāvalî* is a composition in which stıay verses are strung together in a story.

Although Tulasîdāsa has written in almost all these forms yet he has neither discussed the merit or demerit of any particular poetic form, nor has he been bothered about their structural intricacies. He accepts them as they come to him naturally from convention and makes amendments when necessary. He has in a number of contexts referred to the inclusion of many episodes in the *Rāmachaıitamānasa.* But his remarks tend to indicate the nature of the theme rather than the complexity of structure.

Apart from the literary art-forms, Tulasîdāsa has made use of a couple of popular folk-forms as well, although he does not seem to have any particular fancy for these forms either in theory or in practice.

Tulasîdāsa's concept of word-meaning relationship accounts for his general indifference to form and craft in poetry, and it is this organic theory which accounts for his views on poetic language. He has expressed the desirability of variety in style in accordance with the subject but he always lays emphasis on a meaningful, simple and lucid poetic language

1. Tho' your face you can see in the mirror you hold.

(*Atkins*, p. 798)

with brevity of expression.[1]

Since Tulasîdāsa was not a theorist, he has not technically analysed the attributes of style, but he has clearly referred to its three main qualities, 'Oja', 'Mādhurya' and 'Prasāda', and there is ample evidence of their use in his own poetic style. The poetry of Tulasîdāsa has been acclaimed through the ages for the perfect harmony of content and expression. Since his canvas is wide and the subjects are varied, the challenge of a proper expression was really great. But it has been met with remarkable competence.

Very modestly he has declared that he has sung the glory of Rāma in 'the vulgar, or the common man's speech'—grāma-girā. But such modest statements by their frequent recurrence have become almost meaningless in Tulasîdāsa. His style is not only free from the usual poetic flaws but has all the embellishments of a master craftsman.

His knowledge of and love for various figures of speech cannot be questioned. He excels in the use of Onomatopoeia and sustained metaphors. It appears that he had an extremely sensitive ear for melody created by a discriminating use of words in rhythmical sound-patterns. He has exhibited equally great mastery over vivid descriptions with the help of sustained metaphors. Figures based on similes find special favour with him. That Tulasîdāsa was well acquainted with almost all the figures of speech is evident from the fact that the later rhetoricians have drawn heavily on Tulasîdāsa's poetry for quoting examples in their works.

Enamoured of his poetic skill, a number of scholars have undertaken the tough exercise of proving that Tulasîdāsa was well conversant with the various theories of Sanskrit Poetics. They have arrived at such conclusions on the basis of some oblique references in his writings. For example, his oft-quoted line 'Dhuni awarēba kavita guna jātî' has been a subject of great controversy among the scholars and commentators, some of whom have tried to see in it references to the 'Dhvani', 'Vakrōkti', and 'Rîti' schools.

However, when Tulasîdāsa refers to his language as the

1. "Small and few are his words, but their meaning is deep,
Sweet and easy to hear, hard to follow and keep."
(Ayōdhyā Kāṇḍa : *Atkins*, p. 794)

common man's speech, he has the literary status of the common language vis-a-vis Sanskrit in his mind. His insistence on using the spoken language for the major work which he had undertaken is obviously more than a poetic principle. It is a democratic approach to literature—an effort to elevate the common man's dialect to the status of a literary medium. It was really a great task which Tulasîdāsa has performed with great success and it is this democratic approach which has made Tulasîdāsa a poet of the people.

Tulasîdāsa's place in literature is rather unique in that he is a poet of both—the masses and the classes. He composed Rāma-Kathā in the common man's dialect in order to make it popular, but as a composer he had had his own conception of an ideal reader in his mind. He declares that his work, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, should be viewed by the eyes of intellect. He goes a step further and asserts that any composition which is not respected by the intelligentia is a waste of labour on the part of the poet. For him an ideal reader is an intelligent person possessed of the faculty of discrimination and a sense of propriety. In his *Dōhāvalî* he goes to the extent of defining his reader as a sensitive and knowledgeable person who is conversant with the various Rasas, attributes and flaws etc. mentioned in poetics. And, last but not the least, his reader has to be a devotee of Rāma because for Tulasîdāsa, poetry means only devotional poetry. Therefore, only those who have faith in Rāma and are his devotees can achieve the state of identification with the poet. It is evident from a number of references that Tulasîdāsa believed in the communication of the poet's experience to his reader and implicitly supported the theory of transpersonalisation in poetry. It explains why Tulasîdāsa is so popular among the various classes of society. The levels of his poetic appeal are many and varied and the reasons of his popularity among different classes are different.

Tulasîdāsa's works do not offer much material to a theorist, and, as I have mentioned earlier, one does not find any systematic and sustained analysis of the problems relating to poetics and rhetorics. But it is equally evident that he was well conversant with different schools of literary art and was a scholar poet in the true sense of the word.

20

Tulasîdāsa as a World Poet

PROF. R. C. PRASĀD

What makes Tulasîdāsa a world poet ? What makes him more relevant to our times than any other poet, if indeed he is more relevant than Dante, say, or Homer, or Virgil, or Shakespeare, or Donne ? Could it be that his poems abound with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo ? And, if so, does it mean that Tulasî's poetry, like all high poetry, is infinite ? Is it, as Shelley said, "as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially" ?

An answer to these questions calls for much more knowledge not of Tulasî alone, but of other world poets as well, than I am ever likely to acquire. But a modest attempt can here be made to consider Tulasîdāsa's claim to greatness both as a poet and as a religious thinker. It can be truly said that except Dante in Italy and Shakespeare in England, there is perhaps no single figure in the national and literary annals of other lands who represents for his countrymen what Tulasîdāsa—the 'moon' of Hindi literature as a well-known couplet has it—represents for north Indians and even for those living far into the south. He is the symbol of that essential and unbroken continuity between Purāṇic Āryāvarta and modern India which is the dominant note of Indian civilisation

throughout the centuries ; he is, to some extent, the father of Hindi poetry and Hindi literature ; the incarnation of India's genius, the interpreter of her past and the prophet of her future. He is not only the supreme poet, but the national poet of India. A religious thinker and reformer no less than a poet, he strove, like the Italian poet Dante, to translate his dream from the sphere of ideas to the sphere of facts : first, his dream of a living Hindû culture, for which he strove to "revitalise every aspect of Hindû society and culture as he found it";[1] and then, his dream of integrating this culture into his own devotional ideology, for which he strove to "harmonise the divergent facets" of Hindû culture by standing firmly in the existing tradition, of which the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is an example, and translating it into the vernacular language. "It is here," observes F.R. Allchin, "that his skill as a poet plays its part. For, for the people of a large part of north India Tulasî claims reverence comparable to that accorded to Luther as translator of the Bible into the native German. Many men have paid him their homage. His epic has been compared not only to that of Vālmîki, but to the Vēdas themselves, or to the Kuran for (*sic*) the Muslim, or the Bible of the Christian. Others (including Mahātmā Gāndhî) have set it beside the *Bhagavadgîtā*."[2]

Of Tulasîdāsa's place among the major Indian poets there can be no question; he is as sublime as Vālmîki and as elegant as Kālidāsa in his handling of theme. Tulasî, as Nābhājî (fl. c. 1600 A.D.), the author of the *Bhaktamāla*, said, was no other than Vālmîki himself born again as Tulasîdāsa to supply, by means of his new *Ramāyaṇa*, a boat for the easy passage of the boundless ocean of existence. "Now again," he added, "as blessing to the faithful, he has taken birth and published the sportive actions of the god." And time has substantiated Nābhājî's statement. Lest, however, the reader should form the impression that the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is merely a Hindi translation of Sanskrit epic, it must here be pointed out that while

1. F.R. Allchin, *The Petition to Ram* (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966), p. 18 (Introduction).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 *et seq.*

Tulasî follows the course of Vālmîki's story, dividing it into seven *kāṇḍas* bearing the names that Vālmîki had given to his sections, the Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa* is essentially different from that of Vālmîki, "the copious and original source of all the poems which celebrate the deed of *Rāma*."[1] The *uttarkāṇḍa* in the Hindi epic, for instance, bears no resemblance whatever to that of the Sanskrit work. Nor does the reader find anything in the latter resembling the conversation between Garuṛa and Kākabhushunḍi. A.A. Macdonell's statement, that the Hindi 'version' by Tulasîdāsa is an important 'adaptation' of the Sanskrit epic, is therefore ill-founded.

Like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Hindi epic too is rather a long nature poem in the grand manner, a poem in which we see the hero more in action amid woodland scenes than in the palace. Like its epic predecessors, again, it is closely connected with the religious faith of millions of people and is "the time-honoured repository of their legendary history and mythology, of their ancient customs and observances, as well as of their most cherished gems of poetry."[2] Although it belongs to mediaeval India, one feels that it actually belongs, like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Iliad*, to a younger world; we enter them "as we enter a house in Pompeli—the colours may still seem fresh, and no mark of decay remind us of their age, but we feel that they belong not to us or ours, and a gulf of ages lies between us and our objects."[3] Both Vālmîki and Tulasî possessed the qualities of divine furor and the universality of knowledge and were in no way less learned than Homer or Virgil or Petrarch, nor were they unfamiliar with the skill of hiding their erudition, like Dante, under an allegorical exterior. Probably because a part of his wisdom consisted in an understanding of the passions, Tulasîdāsa, like Vālmîki, was able to produce a great emotional effect in his readers, and this is the source of his

1. See W. Douglas P. Hill (tr.), *The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rama* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. xvii *et seq.* for a detailed examination of the points of difference between Tulasîdāsa's poem and Vālmîki's epic.
2. Monier Williams, *Indian Epic Poetry*, Preface, iii, iv. Quoted by Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Ramayana of Valmiki* (Varanasi : The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963), p. vii.
3. *Ibid.*, p. v (Introduction).

power both as entertainer and as teacher. No less than Vālmîki or Kālidāsa, he could also create a world not fettered by the laws of nature, a world "which is of the very essence of joy, which is self-existent and not depending on anything else, and which brings into being a creation shining with the nine *rasas*."[1] If Vālmîki's poetry gives—as all great poetry gives—in a beautiful form a message of deep meaning and overloaded significance, the greatness of Tulasî's epic lies in its suggestion of the profoundest vision in the most perfect style.

If Kālidāsa claims merit for his power of evoking the emotions of love, pathos, heroism, and wonder, Tulasîdāsa too merits praise for the brilliance of his descriptions and skill in evoking all these emotions in addition to those of deep personal devotion, loyalty and friendship. The reader, it is said, marvels at the vividness and precision of Kālidāsa's observations and at his skill in bringing before us scenes of Indian life in the court and forest, of the ancient *svayambara*, of marriage rites, etc. He finds the same scenes depicted in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* with equal, if not greater, vividness and precision. True, the Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa* is not "the poetic reflex of the achievements" of any emperor,[2] but in the scenes where the demons torment the hermits and sages and are ultimately annihilated, it is certainly a reflex of the age, a crowning achievement of the poet who wished his contemporaries to remember that there was no reason whatever to despair. By depicting Rāma's victory over the band of demons, Tulasî reminds his readers of the ultimate victory of truth over the forces of evil, of Kaliyuga.

Just as the Kāvya style attains in Kālidāsa its highest pitch, so does the epic style in Hindi reach its perfection in Tulasî. If Kālidāsa, as Keith said, chooses to show us his skill in poetical artifice in the *Raghuvansha*, Tulasîdāsa chooses to do the same in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*. Tulasî is not—he never was—behind Kālidāsa in the use of a remarkable number of metres,[3]

1. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Hindu View of Art* (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1933).
2. *The Raghuvansa*, as A.B. Keith has observed, provides the poetic reflex of the achievement of Samudragupta and Chandragupta.
3. Of the varṇika metres used in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* the following may be mentioned : *anuṣṭukh*, *indravajrā*, *totaka*, *bhujangaprayāta*,

nor in the employment of alliterations, yamakas, paronomasias, onomatopoeias, etc. Kālidāsa's *forte* is declared to lie in similes. Tulasîdāsa excels in both metaphors and similes, especially in the latter. The story of Rāma's wedding is, for Tulasî, the happy and auspicious king of seasons, spring; Rāma's departure to the forest is the intolerable heat of summer, and the tale of his journeying the burning sun and wind; the fierce war with the demons is the season of the rains, a blessing to the gods as rain is to the rice-fields; the rule of Rāma—an age of happiness, gentle conduct and greatness—is the fair autumn, pure and pleasant; the story of the virtues of Sîtā, that crowning glory of womanhood, is the virtue of this water, incomparable, undefiled; the character of Bharata is its refreshing coolness, ever the same and indescribable. Vishvāmitra's love, like the clear unfathomed depth of ocean, swells to the highest tide of ecstasy under the full-moon influence of Rāma's presence. When Rāma tosses upon the ground the two broken pieces of Lord Shiva's bow the latter is as pleased and free of care as a tired swimmer on reaching a shallow; the kings who had failed to lift up the bow are as confounded at the breaking of the bow as a lamp is dimmed at dawn of day; but Sîtā's gladness can only be compared to that of the *chātakî* on finding a rain-drop in October; while Lakshmaṇa fixes his eyes on Rāma as the *chakōra* on the moon. When certain kings—all frantic degenerate fools—are inflamed with desire and want to carry off Sîtā, the good ones put the whole assembly to shame and in a speech full of similes declare : "Like a crow who would rob the king of the birds of an offering; or a rat who would spoil a lion; as a man who is passionate without cause and yet wishes for peace of mind; as a reviler of Shiva who wishes for happiness and prosperity; as a greedy and covetous man who wishes for fair fame, and as a gallant who would have no scandal; as an enemy of God who wishes to be saved; such is your desire, O ye kings." Kālidāsa's similes are not more appealing than Tulasî's. Moreover,

mālinî, *rathodhata, vanshastha, vasantatilakā, shārdûlavikrîḍita,* and *sragdhara*. All metres other than *chaupāîs, dōhās* and *sōraṭhās* are called chhanda by Tulasî, who generally uses the varnika metres like *anuṣṭukh* for the composition of his *slokas* and hymns.

it is Tulasî, and not Kālidāsa,[1] who offers—if poets do really offer—"a solution or suggested solution of the mysteries of life." Whereas the *Raghuvansha* fails to offer any such solution, the *Rāmacharitamānasa* eminently succeeds in doing so and brings, as W. Douglas P. Hill has rightly said, "a simple and pure gospel —good news of salvation—in homely and idiomatic vernacular straight home to the heart of the average Hindû, oppressed by the prospect of perpetual rebirth and depressed by the impossibility of the unlearned ever grasping the knowledge of the Absolute demanded by the metaphysicians of the *advaita* school."[2] The poem, Hill further maintains, not only presents the ideals of chivalry, tenderness and love, it also promises salvation to "the humblest outcaste if only he would put his trust, with love and adoration, in the Name of Rāma."[3]

What Sri Aurobindo says[4] about Hindû drama and epic is highly significant. "But to the Hindû," he says, speaking about the latter, "whose ideas of epic are not coloured with the wrath of Achilles, epic motive and character are not confined to what is impetuous, huge and untamed."[5] Tulasî, unlike the European epic poet, does not feed on the physical, grossly material features of life. Like the poets of the great Indian tradition he treats of gentleness, patience, self-sacrifice, purity, and other civilised virtues as he treats of martial fire, brute strength, revenge, anger, hate and ungovernable self-will. He excels in depicting the impetuous and the gentle, and even though his idea of epic is not "coloured with the wrath of Achilles" he is endowed with competence enough to depict this wrath as movingly as any other poet in the world. He not only knows how to evoke the nine different forms of *rasa*; he also depicts martial fire in Lakshmaṇa, brute strength and revenge in Rāvaṇa, anger in Kaikēyî and Parashurāma, hate in the demons and ungovernable self-will in Rāvaṇa as well as in other demonic characters.

1. See A.B. Keith, *Classical Sanskrit Literature* (London : Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 45.
2. *Op. cit.*, p. xix (Introduction).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Vide Kalidasa* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1954), Second Series, Chap. I.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Just as Dante is the successor alike of the poets of ancient Rome and of the prophets of the Old Testament, so is Tulasî the successor alike of the *Purāṇas* and of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmîki. The splendour of Tulasî's art, the pregnant concision of his style, the perfect correspondence of thought with utterance also remind one of Dante. These are some of the qualities we would attribute to his native genius as well as to his study of the Sanskrit poets. (Dante, it may be pointed out, derived them for his study of the Latin poets). Both Dante and Tulasîdāsa, however, make these qualities essentially their own, the former drawing fresh harmonies from that new Italian language which is itself the speech of imperial Rome grown to maturity, the latter from his "racy idiomatic language, larded with popular maxims and phrases, and...polished compounds and figures of speech which might well grace any text-book of Indian poetics. The *Rāmacharitamānasa*, like the *Divina Commedia*, is the first vernacular poem of modern India that can claim equality with the masterpieces of classical antiquity. It interprets like the *Divina Commedia*, again, "an epoch of abinding significance in the history of man." While the Italian poem interprets it, not only by rendering intelligible the intellectual, political, and religious heritage of the later Middle Ages, but also by the poet's unique revelation of the passions and motives of his contemporaries, the *Rāmacharitamānasa* interprets the period[1] allegorically and from the Vaiṣṇavita angle of a poet who "attempted to reconcile the *Advaita Vēdānta* point of view with the Rāmāite teachings of Rāmānanda's disciples." The men and women he has created in his epic stand out—as in the *Divina Commedia*—from its cantos with an actuality, a dramatic power of delineation that even Kālidāsa or Shakespeare can hardly surpass. And, though faith, hope and love in Rāma is professedly Tulasî's subject, his poem is a treasury, again like Dante's *opus magnum*, of the most faithful and delicate transcripts from external nature : Janaka's garden planted with ornamental trees of every kind and overhung with many-coloured creepers, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa emerging from the shade of the arbour, like two spotless moons from a riven cloud and

1. It marked the zenith of Muslim power in India.

the two gallant champions looking like a white lotus and a dark, with their hair parted like a raven's wing on their comely head, and here and there bedecked with bunches of flower-buds.[1] Both Dante and Tulasîdāsa are the poets of what Francis Thompson called love's "possible divinities and celestial prophecies"; they are the poets of Eternity when they see "bound by love into one volume what is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe" and find desire and will brought into perfect harmony with "the love that moves the Sun and the other stars."

It is to "the otherness of mental or spiritual realities," says G. Wilson Knight, that the source of all poetry can be traced. These, he further says, 'are a 'nothing' until mated with earthly shapes," for creation is nothing but an offspring of this union between 'earth' and 'heaven', the material and the spiritual.[2] The source of Tulasîdāsa's work, too, is rooted in the otherness of spiritual realities which are mated with earthly shapes. Rāma's character, based though it is on the oral and written traditions of the country, is born of this union. Rāma is *Puruṣōttama*—the 'Higher Self', 'beyond the perishable and imperishable', 'the former being the world, or the totality of all existence, and the latter being the seed from which the universe manifests itself endlessly.' He exemplifies 'the two spirits' of the world, one emerging in front of action and the other continuing motionless "in that perpetual silence from which the action comes and in which all actions cease and disappear into timeless being Nirvāṇa."[3] In Rāma these two realities meet and in Him their opposition is reconciled. He is the Logos and Everlasting I Am, both Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Love.

Viewed from the angle of characterisation, Tulasî and Homer are poles apart. For Homer the tale was the thing, for Tulasî it was Rāma's character and his glory, might and power.

1. There are many such transcripts in the *Divina Commedia* : the fire-flies gleaming on the hillside at nightfall after the long summer day, the quivering of the sea at dawn, the appearance of the stars at the first rise of evening, the song of the skylark, etc.
2. G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 1930.
3. C.K. Handoo, *Tulasîdāsa* (Or ent Longmans, 1964), p. 193.

And this explains Homer's thin and accidental characterisation as well as the fact that Tulasî's characters are all distinct people with varying human relations, conflicts, motives of action and impulses. Both Homer and Tulasî thumb-nailed well ; but whereas Homer afterwards lost heart, Tulasî did not. Nausicaa, for instance, appears dramatically and shapes, as T.E. Shaw has pointed out, "for a few lines, like a woman—then she fades, unused."[1] Neither Sîtā nor Mantharā ever fades in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, or is a silent witness to the main action of the epic. The central family standing out in Homer's epic includes "the sly cattish wife, that cold-blooded egotist Odysseus, and the priggish son who yet met his master-prig in Menelaus."[2] Tulasî's 'heroes and exemplars' were different people.

Both Homer and Tulasî appear to have loved the rural scene as only simple citizens can. No farmers, they had learned the points of a good greenwood tree. They were surely neither land-lubbers nor stay-at-home nor ninnies. But whereas Homer's pages are steeped in a queer naivete, Tulasî is quite sophisticated and subtle.[3] Yet there is a dignity about both which compels respect and baffles us, they being neither simple in sensibility nor primitive socially. Homer sprinkles tags of epic across his pages ; Tulasî borrows a great deal from the Vālmîki and *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇas* and the *Hanumannāṭaka*.

Like the Homeric poems, Tulasî's epic is a picture of a heroic age (Rāmarājya) on which the poet looks back as far-off in the past, but for his idea of which he often draws not on his own days, as Homer did, but on the *Purāṇas* and the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*. The gods and goddesses of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, like the deities of the *Iliad*, are men and women, stronger and

1. *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1956), Translator's Note.
2. *Ibid.*
3. He is the author of 'the best poetry' in Hindi. About the best poetry, according to A.C. Bradley, "there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion. The poet speaks to us of one thing, but in this one thing there seems to lusk the secret of all. He said what he meant, but his meaning seems to beckon away beyond itself, or rather to expand into something boundless which is only focussed in it" (*Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 1909). The *Rāmacharitamānasa* is full of the atmosphere of infinite suggestion.

fairer than mortals, able to work wonders and to take any form they please, but not all-powerful or all-wise. From time to time they rain down flowers before Rāma enters the pavilion in Janaka's city ; the goddesses appear, disguised as women, witness Sîtā's marriage ; when Sîtā sets her foot within the lists all beholders are fascinated by her charms, particularly the gods who in their delight sound their kettledrums and rain down flowers midst the singing of the *apsarās* : after Sîtā lets fall the wreath upon Rāma's breast :

> "Gods, seraphs, saints, men and dum creatures expressed
> Their victorious joy as each other they blessed ;
> The nymphs and goddesses, with dancing and singing,
> To earth frequent handfuls of flowers were flinging."
>
> (Childhood, Chaupāî 269)

But whereas Homer's deities are often immoral, Tulasî's are morally faultless. True, "whoever listens to Nārada's advice, be it man or woman, is certain to become a homeless beggar" (Childhood, Chaupāî 79). But Nārada, like Bhrigu and Durvāsā, is only an arch-riṣi, a saint,[1] and not a god. Indrāṇi, Shāradā, Lakshmî and Bhavānî are said to be the wisest of all the queens of heaven, and no jealous goddesses. When the nuptial procession begins to approach the pavilion, they assume the disguise of woman's form and flock to the king's seraglio, singing delightfully with divine voice, and for joy, says the poet, there was no one who recognised them.[1] While Zeus of the Homeric poems[2] is a sensual, passionate but genial person, Brahma, the Creator and the first god of the later Hindû triad, is a kind-hearted and all-perfect deity. When Umā begins her penance and for three thousand years eats only dry leaves of the *bēl* tree, Brahmā's deep voice resounds through heavens :

> "Hear me, O maiden, O mountain-king's daughter,
> Soon you'all attain your desire ;
> So give up your suff'rings, he soon will be yours,
> Lord Shiva, to whom you aspire."
>
> (Childhood, Dōhā 72)

1. Childhood, Chaupaî 322.
2. "The moral standards of the gods," says T.A. Sinclair in his *History of Classical Greek Literature*, "are not better than those of human beings ; they often seem worse" (p. 20).

Even Shiva the destroyer is a kindly deity who meditates on Tulasî's Rāma.[1] His destruction of Kāmadēva is no unkind act performed out of malice or enmity ; it only exemplifies his love of man, of the law and self-control. When Kāma begins to provoke love, the stepping-stones of the law are swept away in a moment ; religious laws and obligations, ceremonial observances. knowledge and philosophy, self-mortification, etc. are all panic-stricken and put to flight. Every creature in the world, animate or inanimate, forgets natural restrain and becomes subject to sensual passions. On seeing Shiva, Kāmadēva trembles, and the whole world returns to itself. Every living creature at once grows calm, as when a drunkard recovers from his drunkenness. Kāmadēva, a god, is also full of the milk of divine kindness. He agrees to incur Shambhu's displeasure for the sake of the Riṣis and gods who were being harassed by Tāṛakā, a demon of gigantic strength of arm and high renown. The Creator had reassured them, saying, "The demon shall die when a son is born of the seed of Shambhu, who shall conquer him in fight." It was He who had asked them to send Kāmadēva, the god of love, to Shiva to agitate his soul.

Though Homeric religion is basically different from Ṭulasî's, Homeric morality appears to be relatively high and akin to what Tulasî depicts in his poems. Fear of the gods, Homer appears to have believed, though powerful as far as it goes, would not go very far towards making man moral. For that he needs a moral law, independent of his religion. Tulasî, however, believes that devotion to God is enough and that the repentance of even the greatest sinner is accepted by the Lord. All virtues stem from Him, who is the lake of physical beauty, house of virtues, benefactor of the universe.[2] He is :

> "Like smoke-bannered fire for the forests of the Dānavas,
> with long and powerful arms, fierce bow and terrible arrows,
> With ruddy hands and feet, face and eyes the colour of

1. Cf. "But Shiva, his mind and his thought concentrated,—
And wholly on Rāma again contemplated."
(Childhood, Chaupāî 82)

2. *Vinayapatrikā*, 44.

red lotuses, a place of virtues and abode of beauty equal to many love gods.
Sun for the withering of the water lilies of lust, frost for the lotus-garden of love, anger and intoxication,
Lion for the most maddened elephant of greed, banisher of earth's load for the sake of devotees !"[1]

Although Tulasî does not appear to advocate the need of a moral law, independent of religion, Rāma, his brothers, and the warriors whom they lead are all full of what Greeks call *aidos*, the sense of honour, and *nemesis*, literally 'distribution' or that feeling which is roused in the mind by an unjust distribution—moral indignation. Rāma feels *aidos* for the opinion of his subjects. Lakshmaṇa and Bharata feel *nemesis* when their own sense of right is shocked. In the *Rāmacharitamānasa* we find a riper moral sense than in the *Odyssey*, and a much larger number of words to express moral distinctions.

Among the epic poets of the world after Homer, the most influential and the most attractive no doubt has been Virgil, the Roman Homer, whose *Aeneid* is often described as a 'literary' rather than a 'genuine' or 'primary' epic. It is to this category of literary or secondary epics that the *Rāmacharitamānasa* also belongs. Possessed, it seems, by 'the glory of the countryside divine', both Tulasî and Virgil had an unmistakable love for nature, a love that shows itself in the sympathy which personifies inanimate things and attributes human feelings to the brute creation. While Virgil freely borrowed from Homer, Tulasîdāsa "borrowed a great deal from the *Vālmîki* and *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇas* and the *Hanumannāṭaka*...scattered through the book and delicately woven into the texture of the story, sometimes we find translations literal or otherwise, of verses from the *Gîtā*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhāgavata*, the *Purāṇas*, Kālidāsa's plays, the Sanskrit dramas and other books."[2] While Virgil's aim was to make the glories of Greek epic live again for his countrymen in Roman guise, Tulasî speaks of his aim as follows :

"In accord with all the *Purāṇas* and different sacred texts,

1. *Vinayapatrikā*, 46.
2. C.K. Handoo, *op. cit.*, pp. 128 *et seq.*

> and with what has been recorded in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (of Vālmîki) and elsewhere, I, Tulasî, to gratify my own heart's desire, have composed these lays of Raghunātha in most choice and elegant modern speech."[1]

Tulasî's aim is to "narrate the great deeds of Raghupati" and make them live again for his countrymen in his homely speech. "I declare and record it on a fair white sheet," says Tulasî, "that though my style has not a single charm of its own, it has a charm known throughout the world, which men of discernment will ponder as they read—the gracious name of Raghupati ; all-purifying essence of the Purāṇas and the Vēda, abode of all that is auspicious, destroyer of all that is inauspicious, ever murmured in prayer by Umā and the great Tripurāri." And he goes on to praise his theme, clothed though it is in a vulgar tongue : "My language is that in vulgar use, but my subject is the highest, the story of Rāma, enrapturing the world."

Critics have often pointed out that it was impossible for Virgil, writing in Augustan days, to reproduce the primitive tone of an epic born when the world was young. He could not, it is said, remain unaffected by all that had come to being in the interval—Greek tragedy, Greek philosophy, the learning and the sentiment of Alexandria. Much in the same way Tulasîdāsa found it impossible to reproduce the tone of Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, though his work is "no unworthy rival of its more fortunate predecessor." Whereas Vālmîki's classical Sanskrit is rich in polished phraseology, Tulasî's idiom is rough, colloquial and "in the course of three centuries has contracted a tinge of archaism."[2] Like Virgil, again, Tulasî could not remain unaffected by all that had come to being in the interval —the emergence of the vernaculars, the Vaiṣṇavites, Rāmānanda and his disciples Rāi Dāsa, Pîpā and Kabîra. Each of these influences is discernible in the *Rāmacharitamānasa* ; that of the vernaculars in the language of the poet[3] ; that of the

1. Childhood (Sanskrit Invocation).
2. See F.S. Growse's illuminating introduction to his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulasîdāsa.
3. The poet uses Braja bhāṣā, Avadhî, Bundēlkhaṇḍî, Māgadhî, Bhōjapurî and also a few Persian and Arabic words in his poems.

Vaiṣṇavites in the religious speculation, distinct and profound, which pervades the poem ; that of Rāmānanda in the fact that it was he who revolutionised the worship of Rāma throughout north India.

Besides corresponding to the literary standards, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, like the *Aeneid*, embodies the thoughts and aspirations of the age to which it was addressed. The Indian Virgil knew that a story told for the story's sake would not suffice. Like the Roman poet who considered the true subject for a Roman epic to be Rome, Tulasî considered the true subject for an Indian epic to be Rāma. "The most elegant composition of the most talented poet," he said :

> "has no real beauty if the name of Rāma is not in it : in the same way as a lovely woman adorned with the richest jewels is vile if unclothed. But the most worthless production of the feeblest versifier, if adorned with the name of Rāma, is heard and repeated with reverence by the wise, who extract what is good in it, like bees gathering honey though the poetry has not a single merit, the glory of Rāma is manifested thereby."

But whereas the interest of the *Aeneid* is national rather than personal or religious, that of the Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa* is mainly, I think, religious, which is why the "masses and the cultured classes have as much faith in it as if it were the equivalent of the Vēdas, the Upaniṣads or the *Gîtā*.... It deals with problems of social, political and family life from the point of view of *dharma*, or righteous living, and religion."[1] It conforms to C.M. Bowra's classical prescription that :

> "An epic poem is by common consent a narrative of some length and deals with events which have a certain grandeur and importance and come from a life of action, especially of violent action such as war. It gives a special pleasure because its events and persons enhance our belief in the worth of human achievement and in the dignity and nobility of man."[2]

1. C.K. Handoo, *op. cit.*, 126.
2. *From Virgil to Milton* (London : Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 1.

Even the constant repetitions of certain stereotyped phrases in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*—such as 'lotus feet', 'streaming eyes', 'quivering frame', etc.—and prayers and invocations appear to be a heritage from the ancients whose epics are, broadly speaking, divisible into two distinct classes. Vālmîki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, like the Homeric epics and *Beowulf*, belongs to the class of ministrel poetry or to that of oral epics which are said to be "the mature form of improvised lays such as...were once popular in many parts of the world." The Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa* belongs to the second category : it is a written epic meant not to be heard or recited but to be read. The technique of the oral epic is largely that of improvisation and the "constant epithets, the repeated lines and blocks of lines, the copious store of synonyms and of alternative word-forms, are a heritage from improvisation." Since the Tulasian epic was not composed for recitation—though, of course, people have been reciting it—it is in some ways more closely woven than the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*. "It is also less wordy and diffuse," says F.S. Growse, "than the Sanskrit original and, probably in consequence of its modern date, is less disfigured by wearisome interpolations and repetitions..." The reason why it is more closely woven is that it belongs to the class of epics to which the *Aeneid* belongs. Although Tulasî and Virgil, too, use stock passages for recurring themes and are masters of a traditional language which often has little relation to the vernacular of their home, it is because they are consciously following Vālmîki and Homer "in the conscious conviction that they ought to do so, not because their conditions compel them to use devices which are indispensable to oral poetry and make it what it is."

The *Aeneid* is said to have dominated Roman education and literature for centuries. The *Rāmacharitamānasa* has not in any way been less popular and influential. "I have never met a person," says Grierson about the *Mānasa*, "who had read it in the original and who was not impressed by it as the work of a great genius." Like the *Aeneid*, the *Mānasa*, too, has been a 'set book' for centuries of scholars and students alike and has evoked admiration from almost every writer from Nābhā Dāsa to Nagēndra. Just as the *Aeneid* survived both the rise of Christianity and the fall of Rome, so has the *Mānasa* survived

both the decline of popular devotionalism and the division of Hindû religion into numerous cults and sects. In *An Englishman Defends Mother India*, Ernest Wood, the author, considers Tulasî's *Mānasa* to be "superior to the best books of the Latin and Greek languages," and in *Akbar, the Great Moghul*, Vincent Smith records his appreciation of Tulasî, saying, "...that Hindû was the greatest man of his age in India and greater even than Akbar himself, inasmuch as the conquest of the hearts and minds of millions of men and women affected by the poet was an achievement infinitely more lasting and important than any or all the victories gained in war by the monarch...." Sir George Grierson was not overestimating the popularity of our poet when he said that while Kabîra's or Dādû's adherents may be numbered by hundreds of thousands, no less than ninety millions of the people of Upper India acknowledged Tulasî as their spiritual guide.

The great and complicated scheme of the *Mānasa*, though essentially different from that of the Nibelungen legend, is akin to it in an important respect. In the Nibelungen legend as well as in the *Mānasa* historical and mythical elements mingle. Insofar as the structure of the *Mānasa* is concerned, its affinity to the German epic *Nibelungenlied* cannot be overemphasised. The *Nibelungenlied* is not a mere collection of certain episodes selected from the legend, but consists of and exhausts the whole of the legendary material, thereby attaining a higher degree of unity than the *Iliad*. With slight verbal modification the remark may be made to apply to the *Mānasa* as well. The closeness with which both the poems link a crime and its punishment is characteristic of an ideal world, such as the spirit of a nation yet in its youth dreams of and desires. On the contrary the heroes of the Homeric poem, especially of the *Iliad* with their naive selfishness are nearer the level of ordinary humanity. The *Mānasa*, however, is superior to the *Nibelungenlied* as a work of art, for reasons that are, to the careful reader, obvious. The *Nibelungenlied* is admittedly a work of various hands, some of whom have arbitrarily followed their own devices while others have scrupulously adhered to the original designs of their predecessors. While, therefore, the best parts—if we refrain from considering the difference of style—may fairly compare

with the noblest flowers of Tulasî's poetry, we can hardly venture to mention the name of Tulasî—or Homer—in connection with the inferior ones. Of the *Mānasa* it can be said that there is hardly any passage in it which the reader finds dull or grotesque, whereas side by side with the most beautiful scenes in the *Nibelungenlied*, we also come across many dull and sometimes even grotesque passages through which we painfully make our way.

Who are the poets who belong, not merely to their own race and language but to the world? T. S. Eliot gives the following answer :

> "...the true sage is rarer than the true poet; and when the two gifts, that of wisdom and that of poetic speech, are found in the same man, you have the great poet. It is poets of this kind who belong, not merely to their own people but to the world..."[1]

And Tulasî was admittedly a great poet, a world poet, who not only had the gift of wisdom but also possessed the gift of speech. He derives his status—as did Shakespeare and Goethe—not from one masterpiece, but from the total work of his lifetime. If they created two great mythical figures in Hamlet and Faust, Tulasî created the third, Rāma. It was his prerogative, like Shakespeare's and Goethe's, to have the universal, which, as Coleridge said, "is potentially in each particular, opened out to him, the *homo generalis*, not as an abstraction from observation of a variety of men, but as the substance capable of endless modifications, of which his own personal existence was but one, and to use this one as the eye that beheld the other, and as the tongue that could convey the discovery."[2] Like them, again, he has undisputed claims to greatness for the elements of *permanence* and *universality* found in his work. As regards permanence, there is no denying the fact that Tulasî's work has continued—and must continue—"to give delight and benefit to successive generations." His influence is not confined to an age only; it has continued to matter to the poets and people of every

1. 'Goethe as the Sage' in *On Poetry and Poets* (London : Faber and Faber Limited, 1957), p. 207.
2. Lectures on Jonson, Beaumont, etc., 1818.

age who no doubt understand him differently and are compelled to evaluate his work afresh. And he has been—and is—important almost universally, that is, to his own race and language as to others. It is not only in the work of Dante, Shakespeare or Goethe that we find the common characteristics of *Abundance, Amplitude* and *Unity*. Tulasîdāsa, too, wrote a good deal, and nothing that he has written is negligible. Like Shakespeare and Goethe, he had a very wide range of interests[1]—amplitude—as well as sympathy and understanding, and like them, what he gives us is Life itself. This is mainly due to the fundamental unity of his interests, to the fact that he is able to see the world from a particular point of view of a particular age and a particular man in that age.

These remarks must conclude our comparative survey connected with Tulasîdāsa. It has, of course, been only a survey, and incomplete at that : the reader will have found that many more such comparisons can still be made and that there is no reason at all why Tulasîdāsa should not be compared, for instance, with Milton when both wrote secondary epics in the grand style, both wrote religious poems, both created uniquely impressive characters—Satan and Rāvaṇa, for example,—and both were, like Goethe, wise poets. One cannot but admit that in their own way Tulasîdāsa and Milton were both remarkable revolutionaries and scholars, trained on the great masters of the past : Milton on Homer, Virgil and scholasticism; Tulasîdāsa on the Vēdas and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Both of them were laboriously critical in their selection of themes and expression, and they created a style which is entirely their own and never fails to be

1. Cf. "For the fulfilment of desires, Canto V (The *Sundara Kāṇḍa*) is recited in the form of a hymn...(while certain other lines) are considered to be the equivalent of the *Gāyatrî mantra*. From the point of view of righteous living, this book is used as a moral code or *Purāṇa*. It is a musical poem, because people sing it. It is also a drama, because Gōswāmî Tulasîdāsajî started his *Rāma Lîlā* on the basis of this book, which even now is performed in the same manner everywhere. Therefore the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is an epic poem, song, hymn, *mantra* and *drama*. It is to be heard, seen and read. It represents all acknowledged forms of poetry at one and the same time. No other poem in the world is full of such excellence." Quoted by C.K. Handoo, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

significant and lively. While Milton advocated a life of reason, discipline and belief in the Saviour as a cure for all human discontents, Tulasîdāsa, who felt the need quite as strongly, offered *bhakti* or devotion to Rāma as a cure. Tulasîdāsa and Milton were not just content to brood over the barrenness of the age; they tried to awake those around them to the tragedy that stared them in the face. Historically *Paradise Lost* and the *Rāmacharitamānasa* reflect the reaction—but not defeat—which followed the Restoration in England and the alien onslaught on the culture of India. It was clear all too soon to both that the new world facing them was hostile to their cherished ideals, and that the new rule had in many sections of society created irreparable devastation. The form which these poets chose for their heroic songs was not that of their first verses. They abandoned shorter lyrics for the heroic mode which combines great technical dexterity with a refusal to introduce anything humdrum or mean.

It thus appears from such comparisons that I have had to be selective, and in selecting I have particularly favoured points of general interest, my idea being that these comparisons will provide a stimulus to students of comparative literature. This, therefore, is not more than a mere introduction to Tulasîdāsa as a world poet. I shall be amply content with what I have written, if the reader has received the impression that the field of such comparative studies is one which offers exciting opportunities for the daring and resolute scholar who wants to demonstrate how Tulasîdāsa was not the Shakespeare but the Virgil of India. If, indeed, Virgil was the Roman Homer, Tulasî was the Indian Virgil.

21

Relevance of Tulasîdāsa to the Modern Age

PROF. NAGENDRA

Although 'relevance' is a term of the critical jargon of modern times, the concept was not unknown to older critics as well who referred to it, directly or indirectly, when they defined the objectives of poetry or discussed the social, cultural, and moral content of a work of art, especially of an earlier age. The reference became very obvious when they talked of the message of a literary classic for their particular age. Nothing prevents a thoughtful reader from questioning the relevance of a contemporary work, but, properly speaking, the inquiry is more relevant in the case of a work of the past, i.e. in the case of a work which was either written in the past or deals with a theme of the past or is in concordance with the past in spirit. Thus, two conditions are basically attached to the problem of relevance : (i) present-past equation, and (ii) principle of the inevitable effect of the milieu, i.e. relevance can be normally judged of a work of the past in the context of the present, and this judgment necessitates the acceptance of the principle that our norms of judgment are determined to a large extent by the milieu.

There are three distinct approaches to literature : aesthe-

tic, moral, and social. Accordingly, the relevance of an author or a work can be judged under these three heads : aesthetic relevance, ethical relevance, and social relevance.

AESTHETIC RELEVANCE

For the aesthete or the aesthetician, a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and, therefore, the question of the relevance of a work of art for this age or that is not important—not 'relevant' if we use the same jargon. The past-present equation or the law of change does not bother him. For him, beauty is truth and truth beauty, and that is all he knows and wants to know. But this applies only to the exponent of traditional aesthetics. The modern aesthetic critic does not subscribe to this 'static' view. He believes in social change as much as a sociologist does and refuses to accept that our aesthetic sensibility—and, thereby our standards of aesthetic judgment—do not change with the changing environments. In the case of Tulasîdāsa, for instance, while the traditional aesthetician holds that the artistic quality of Tulasîdāsa's poetry has a universal and eternal appeal and, therefore, its aesthetic relevance trangresses the bounds of time and space, the modern aesthete argues differently. He maintains that Tulasîdāsa wrote in a different milieu altogether—in the religious atmosphere of the earlier half of the medieval era, and that it may not therefore be surprising if his poetry does not have the same aesthetic appeal to modern sensibility. He argues that the aesthetic sensibility of an enlightened reader, like his overall attitude towards life, changes with the times, and that is why the modern litterateur may not find the same aesthetic satisfaction there as the man in the sixteenth or seventeenth century did, or for that reason, as the devout reader, whose aesthetic sensibility has not substantially changed, does even today. This argument is not without substance. Even in the later half of the medieval period in Hindi literature dominated by court-poets and poet-rhetoricians, when ornate poetry with a sustained erotic bias had become the fashion of the day, Tulasîdāsa was not taken very seriously as a poet. The famous anecdote about the master-poet of this second phase—Keshavadāsa—corroborates this fact. When questioned as to who was the premier poet in Hindi, he straightaway named himself. "But

what about Sûradāsa and Tulasîdāsa ? "Oh, they are saints !" the poet replied with confidence. This is a clear indication of the change which had taken place in the aesthethic sensibility of the elite during a few decades that intervened. Actually until the beginning of the 20th century, the aesthetic temper of the elite did not quite accept devotional poetry as a work of art. They might read the *Sûrasāgara* or the *Rāmacharitamānasa* for spiritual gratification but for aesthetic enjoyment and enlightenment they relied upon the artistic compositions of poets like Kēshava, Bihārî, Matirāma, and Padmākara only. If the sensibility of the elite could undergo a change within less than half a century, in spite of the fact that there was no vital change in their overall outlook on life, we cannot summarily dismiss the validity of an enquiry into the aesthetic relevance of Tulasîdāsa to an age like ours. We shall, therefore, have to examine the question patiently.

Before we begin our enquiry into the aesthetic relevance of Tulasîdāsa to our times, it will be useful to define the meaning and scope of aesthetic appeal which ultimately decides the question of aesthetic relevance. To put it briefly, aesthetic appeal is a feeling of gratification derived from a work of art which is a pattern of experiences—sensuous, imaginative, emotive, and intellectual, all blended into one. A work of literary art appeals to the ear by means of its verbal and rhythmic music in which sound-patterns are testefully woven together. Its imagery appeals to imagination, its emotive content evokes rich psychological responses and the thought element stimulates our intellect. All these responses are organised into a unified pattern of experiences which constitutes the aesthetic appeal of the art-object as a whole. Tulasîdāsa was a master of verbal art. His works cover a vast range and an infinite variety of sound-patterns from the simplest to the most complex, and from the most delicate to the most tempestuous. The verbal structures in his earlier works—such as the *Nahachhû*, the *Jānakî-Mangala* and the *Paravatî-Mangala* are simple, i.e. soft and straight, in the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, there is a synthesis of the simple and the complex, and *Vinayapatrikā* is characterised by a remarkable cohesion of sound and sense—by a kind of compactness in which hard philosophical material is cast into tough verbal

moulds. Tulasîdāsa's works are a vast treasure-house of rhythmic patterns of all kinds, and that's why they have provided richest source material for musical compositions for centuries and are as popular with the artists of today as they were in the earlier centuries. If the reader crosses the barriers of a regional dialect, he cannot fail to be impressed by the extraordinary facility with which Tulasîdāsa wields his poetic medium at different levels of speech—from the naive idiom of the *Nahachhû* to the highly sanskritised 'stotra' style of invocatory verses in *Vinaya-patrikā*, from the mellow tones of the softer emotive contexts to the terse technical style of the philosophical dialogues, and from the artless expressions of the villagefolk to the sophisticated speech of the genteel characters in the *Mānasa*. Similarly, his skill in metrical compositions is superb. In the *Mānasa*, the metre flows like a stream sometimes playing with ripples and again rushing like torrents. The couplets and other verse-patterns, which appear after a set number of flowing lines, direct the movement of the narrative. The variety of compositions ranging from folk metres and popular song-patterns to the eloquent metres of court-poets used by Tulasîdāsa with equal facility is a glowing testimony to his craftsmanship. The dexterity with which he has combined the narrative and dramatic styles and re-structured the story of Rāma in an organic whole is a rare achievement in medieval literature. Still more striking is the success with which he has woven the threads of the story described through the dialogues of four different batches of narrators and listeners. This is a new structural device invented by Tulasîdāsa to maintain the *purāṇic*-cum-epic character of his narrative. All these ingenuities have their own artistic value which a literary critic or enlightened reader in any age cannot and should not fail to appreciate, and in the face of these, the aesthetic relevance of Tulasî's compositions for our age cannot be denied.

Tulasîdāsa's imagery also covers an equally vast range. No poet of the medieval period—not even his great contemporary Sûradāsa—can vie with Tulasîdāsa in respect of the infinite variety of imagery employed by him. He has collected his images from peasant life, court life, priestly environments, rural and civic life, philosophical treatises, literary classics,

mythological works, and folk-literature. His poetry is a vast gallery of all kinds of images ranging from exquisite miniature paintings to large frescoes. Normally he likes simple and integrated images, but is quite capable of creating complex imagery as well. What he seems to abhor is a truncated image, of which we can hardly search out a single example. His whole poetic creation is an endless endeavour to give a concrete, tangible form to the abstract—to impart physical charms and mental qualities of a human personality to an absolute concept. Actually the very conception of Personified Godhood is a grand exercise in image-making.

In this context, what in Tulasîdāsa's art is of special relevance to the modern reader is his unconventional approach. He has before him a rich tradition of poetic art in Sanskrit and has inherited fairly developed patterns from Prākrita, Apabhramsha and Hindi as well, but he does not adopt any of them as such and casts his own moulds. For example, in his *Rāmacharitamānasa*, he does not obviously follow the structure of the Sanskrit Mahākāvya : the influence of the biographical narratives in Prākrita and Apabhramsha, and of the sûfî romances in Hindi can be discerned to a certain extent, but the overall peculiar pattern of the work is his own creation. In *Vinayapatrikā*, the poet has evolved a new form by grafting the technique of a highly ceremonial court petition on the popular song-pattern of devotional poetry. Similarly, at other levels of composition—in respect of language complexion, metrical forms, imagery, etc. he is a great innovator and has effected a remarkable synthesis between the classical and the popular art-forms, between tradition and experiment in his own way.

The next major factor of aesthetic appeal is the emotive effect created by an art-object in the mind of the reader. This really constitutes the base of aesthetic appeal. Tulasîdāsa's poetic creation teems with all kinds of emotive experience, but they are invariably controlled by an inherent moral consciousness which imparts a peculiar purity and dignity to them. Being an epic writer, he has naturally covered a vast canvas of human life in all its phases and portrayed all the passions at different levels of intensity. But he is singularly free from crudeness and vulgarity. His innate faith in the piety of human

soul, which is pre-eminently symbolised by the moral character of his hero, purges the emotions of their baser elements. Whether it is the portrayal of love or valour, of sorrow or indignation, of humility or remorse, there is always a pleasant sophistication about it. He has an equal command of the beautiful and the sublime ; he can be most impetuous and also most refined according to the exigencies of the situation. Some of the sentiments and their expressions may sound out-of-date today, and the modern reader may fail to share or appreciate them. The cardinal sentiment—*Bhakti* itself may not evoke a proper response in him. But there are other basic sentiments to which he responds inevitably : the manifestations or forms of expression might have changed with the social conditions, but their essential affective quality remains the same. Rāma's serenity and dignity, his commitment to a noble cause, Bharata's devotion to his elder brother, Lakshmaṇa's indignation against all kinds of injustice and offence, Hanumān's valour combined with a sense of complete dedication to the master, Sītā's chastity and selfless love, Rāvaṇa's indomitable pride—all these have been depicted with such empathy and artistic ingenuity that they transcend the range of time and place. And then, Tulasîdāsa's Bhakti, as well, is not altogether without relevance—in the sense that it is not the devotion of a sequestered monk or a recluse to a personal deity, but is addressed to a God who is an emblem of all social and human virtues. His Bhakti is, thus, an experience of the ultimate Reality on a social and human plane—and such an experience is not likely to lose its relevance so long as man continues to cherish social and human values in his life. While true poetry makes personal experience impersonal, classic poetry makes it universal. Thus a classic as a matter of course depicts emotions at the human level and that accounts for its universal appeal—an appeal to the basic human sensibility unconditioned by racial, social and moral prejudices.

MORAL RELEVANCE

A poet of strong moral convictions, Tulasîdāsa commends only such poetry as is conducive to the welfare of all. The object of his devotion is a symbol of the highest ethical values ;

of life. For those who believe in the permanence of moral values, the question again is not relevant. The moral content or message of Tulasî's poetry, so long as it is moral in essence and not in form or ritual, has relevance for all ages. He advocates consistently moral qualities in human conduct—such as truthfulness, fidelity, sincerity, integrity, benevolence, kindness, service to humanity, non-violence, commitment to a noble cause, reverence for the great and the good, sense of justice, courage and freedom from fear, conjugal loyalty, humility or immunity from pride. No sensible modern thinker except the ultra 'mods' who have no faith in life itself can afford to dispense with these virtues whose relevance is not determined by formal changes in our social patterns. Actually, these are the basic qualities that sustain life, and so long as life does not become irrelevant, the relevance of these human virtues shall not be doubted. Tulasîdāsa upholds them under all circumstances without compromise—a little too rigidly sometimes, but we have to make some concession to his asceticism.

The cardinal message of Tulasî's poety is Faith. The whole theme of his *magnum opus*, the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, centres round the affirmation of faith. The story is narrated through the dialogues of four pairs of characters, each pair consisting of one who poses the question and the other who answers it. The first and the premier questioner or exponent of doubt is Satî, Lord Shiva's spouse, who has to pay for it by self-immolation. Her redemption comes when she is reborn as Pārvatî and regains the grace of Lord Shiva by her unshaken faith. Satî, who represents doubt, has to perish and Pārvatî, whose faith is as deep-seated as the mountain from which she has sprung, resolves the doubt. Whereas Satî poses the question, Pārvatî offers the answer. Thus, this Satî-Pārvatî myth contains in embryo the message of the *Mānasa*. The modern age claims to be an age of doubt, but certainly it does not accept doubt as the ultimate reality. In every sphere—Science, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, and Literature—there is an incessant endeavour to resolve the mystery of existence, to discover the integrating principle of life. Tulasîdāsa also does the same thing. He uses all his intellectual resources to discover this integrating principle of existence which is Bhakti for

the medieval man and faith for the modern man. Tulasîdāsa himself had to pass through the strain of spiritual conflict. At the intellectual level he was a monist and believed in Absolute God, but at the emotional plane he found solace only in Bhakti which could be addressed only to a Personified or Humanised God. The strain with which he tries to reconcile the two is obvious in the *Mānasa* as also in *Vinayapatrikā*. Thus it would be wrong to allege that his philosophy of life is basically medieval and as such unsuited to modern sensibility. The eternal conflict between the human impulses 'to know' and 'to feel' and the endeavour of the pragmatic thinker in all ages to reconcile and channelise them into action or in the impulse 'to will' constitute the main argument or essential meaning of Tulasî's poetry. That was the burning problem of his age and, like every classic poet, he has treated a contemporary problem at a universal and eternal plane.

SOCIAL RELEVANCE

It is really the social relevance of Tulasîdāsa which is most under fire, and there are some obvious reasons for it.

Tulasîdāsa, who believed in and advocated the Hindû caste system, has eulogised the Brāhmaṇas in several places and condemned the Shûdras, not as individuals, but as a class.

He was reluctant to concede to women the same status as to men.

He upheld feudal values. His own Bhakti was based on master-slave relationship. For him the king was the supreme authority in the country and a father or patriarch in the family who demanded complete submission from all concerned. Similarly, he was a supporter of priesthood and considered the religious preceptor to be the final authority in matters of social conduct.

All these views are repugnant to modern sensibility, and Tulasîdāsa is naturally exposed to severe criticism from different quarters. I don't wish to hold a brief, nor can I, for all that Tulasîdāsa says or propounds ; but one thing is clear, which is that a good deal of this is the result of a wrong approach to literature. Tulasîdāsa has been regarded as a moral law-giver for centuries and his Western admirers have compared the

Mānasa to the Bible. The 'poet' has naturally to pay the price. I am not for a moment under-estimating the value of the moral and social content of a work of art ; actually, its final assessment rests on the higher values of life which it propounds over and above its aesthetic quality. But a work of art differs from a book on ethics in the sense that its moral import is not stated or laid down in direct language : it is implied and suggested. The problem becomes more complex in the case of a dramatic or an epic poem where different characters speak a different language. In such cases the essential meaning is to be determined according to the context, i.e. in relation to the speaker, the person spoken to and the occasion on which the statement is made. That is why the Sanskrit theorists have defined the commulative import or total suggestion of the work as a whole to be the determining factor.

Many of the objectionable statements of Tulasîdāsa can be explained away by a proper understanding of the 'dramatic method' in the light of the context. For example, some of the uncharitable remarks against women are made by objectionable characters [vide the reference to the eight permanent vices residing in a woman is made by Rāvaṇa himself] ; some of them are addressed to or provoked by wrong types of women—the allegation that 'a woman loses self-control on seeing a handsome man—be he her brother, father or son' is provoked by Shûrpaṇakhā's disgraceful conduct ; the condemnation of women in general by ideal characters like Bharata [Cf. 'Even the Creator does not know the working of a woman's mind'] is obviously the result of an unbearable psychological strain caused by his mother. Similarly the target in the oft-quoted line—'ḍhōla, gaṅwāra, shûdra, pashu, nārî' is the perversity of nature, and not the shûdra or woman as such. We may not be able to absolve Tulasîdāsa from a certain degree of partiality for the Brāhmaṇa in the proper sense of the term—from a feeling of caste consciousness ; but the way in which he has ridiculed Parashurāma and Nārada, condemned Rāvaṇa, and deplored the degradation of the Brāhmaṇa class as a whole in his times, should be enough to exonerate him from the charge. The exclusion of the Shambûka episode from the story of Rāma bears testimony to the fact that Tulasîdāsa did not approve of

the idea that a 'shûdra' was not permitted to practise penance —nay, on the other hand, he has openly conceded equal right of Bhakti to the lowliest of the people.

Our judgment, therefore, should rest on the total import of Tulasîdāsa's poetry. On the whole, he believed in a stable social structure based on the unity of sects and religions and in a sound family system governed by love and duty. He was a friend of the poor and the down-trodden, a staunch supporter of a welfare state, an upholder of social justice and a castigator of all kinds of exploitation. These are some of the obvious conclusions drawn from a proper study of his poetic corpus : and I have no reasons to believe that its relevance can be denied in this or any other age.

I have more or less argued out an axiom in this essay, for the relevance of a classic is self-evident. The *Rāmacharita-mānasa* which has stood the test of time and appealed to the moral and aesthetic sensibility of the vast multitudes in India as also to a number of its foreign readers has established its relevance for all ages. What is really required is a correct perspective and a clear understanding of the following basic principles of literary appreciation, which I would like to reiterate in order to prove my point :

A work of poetic art should not be confused with a book of ethics. The *Mānasa*, therefore, is not the Bible nor is Tulasîdāsa a moral legislator like Manu.

For a proper evaluation of a work of art, we have to judge it at two levels—primarily at the aesthetic level and finally in the context of the moral and social values of life. In the first round, we decide whether or not it is a work of art and in the final round we adjudge whether it is a great work of art or a work of great art.

The message of literature is not stated but implied and communicated through the suggestive power of its artistic medium. In the case of an epic the moral content is woven into its massive structure and is, therefore, to be valued in totality, and not on the basis of stray remarks of the characters or even of the poet himself.

If we keep these points in view, the question of Tulasîdāsa's relevance to our age and to all future ages will be answered beyond doubt.

INDEX

Abdul Fath Gīlānī, Hakīm, 44
Abdul Haq Muhaddith, Sheikh, 37-8
Abdul Qādir, Sheikh, 40
Abdul Qādir Badāûnī, Mullā, 44
Abdul Quddûs, 39
Abdul Wahāb Muttaqī, Sheikh, 37
Abdur-Rahīm Khān-Khānā, 43, 44, 86
Abercrombie, 235
Abul Fazl, 42, 49, 52, 53, 57, 183
Achāryas, 32
Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, 232, 235, 282, 289, 292
Advaitawāda, 31, 110, 111, 113, 122-3, 139, 287
Aeneid, 292-3, 294, 295
Agradāsa, 83
Ain-i-Akbarī, 42
Akbar, Emperor, 37, 40, 42, 48-9, 52-4, 57-8, 67
  Administration, 58-9
  Courtiers, 42-7, 55
  Religious policy, 59, 60
Akbarnāmā, 42
Alāuddīn Khiljī, 34, 41, 57
Alhā, 260, 261
Alī, Sheikh, 37
Allchin, F.R., 122, 282
Alvārs, 32
Ambrose, St., 120
Anandawardhana, 220
Architecture, 52-3
Arif Husain, Sheikh, 41
Ashīrvādī Lāl, 52
Ashōka, 42
Atkins, A.G., 117
Aurobindo, Sri, 123, 286

Bābur, 30, 42, 53, 56
Bādarāyaṇa, 123
Badāûnī, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45
Bagchī, P.C., 122
Bahādur Shāh, Sultān, 37
Bahlul Lōdī, 56
Bahrul Hayāt, 40
Bāhuka, 84, 85, 88, 90, 94, 95, 164, 167, 168
  Composition date, 99
Bairam Khān, 57
Ballads, 259-61
Balzak, 255
Banāras, Mahārājā of, 3
Baranī, Ziāuddīn, 37, 59
Bārānnikōv, P.A., 6, 28n, 160, 252
Barathawāl, Pitāmbar Datta, 122
Baravae Rāmāyaṇa, 94, 97
  Composition date, 100
Bāz Bahādur, 44
Bēnīmādhavadāsa, 90, 94, 95

Bhagvad-Gitā, 43, 120, 123, 187, 247, 270, 282, 294
Bhāgawata Purāṇa, 8, 39, 50, 247, 292
Bhaktamāla, 83, 282
Bhakti, 104-16, 122-3, 125-39, 159, 162, 166, 172, 189, 221-2, 244, 255, 263, 264, 267, 305, 306-7
    Definition, 105-7
    Dependency, 131-3
    Forms, 126-7, 133-4
    Relation with Jnāna, 131-3
    Stages, 134-5, 138
    Ways and means, 136-8
Bhakti cult, 11-13
    Social aspects, 13-14
Bhakti-rasa, 161, 225, 243
Bhāmaha, 162
Bharata, 161
Bhāradwāja, Sage, 20, 142, 264
Bhārdwāj, Rāmdatt, 140
Bhavabhûti, 236
Bhaviṣyapurāṇa, 84
Bhōja, 162
Bhramarageeta, 51
Bihārî, 302
Bîrbal, 43, 53
Bîsaldeo Rāsō, 260
Bloch, Jules, 252
Boileau, 253
Bowra, C.M., 294
Bradley, 256
Brāhmaṇas, 12, 17, 34, 160, 181, 307, 308
    Duties, 176
    Status, 17-18, 148, 156, 164
Brahmapurāṇa, 82
Brahma-Sûtra, 121, 123
Buddha, Lord, 34, 35, 119, 156
Buddhism, 30, 31
Buhler, Karl, 267
Bulkē, Dr., 48
Burhān Ansārî, Sheikh, 41

Carpenter, Estlin, 121
Carpenter, J.N., 121
Caste system, 12, 16-18, 148, 154, 156, 165, 167, 169, 170, 176-8, 307, 308
Chaitanya, 49, 54, 59
Chandra Gupta, 57
Chaturvēdî, Mahēndra, 93n, 218n
Chaudhury, I.N., 244n
Chishtî order, 38-9, 40
City life, 178-81
Class consciousness, 160-1
Coleridge, 118, 297
Communal riots, 33-4
Conjugal love, 203-6
Consciousness, 159-60
Court poets, 24, 46, 275
Cultural conflict, 165-6
Cultural values, 153-8
Cunningham, George, 82

Dādû, 296
Dante, 118, 281, 282, 283, 287-8
Dās Gupta, R.K., 117
Dās Gupta, S.N., 121
Dāûd, Sheikh, 40
Dēvarāja, N.K., 153, 251, 252, 253
Devotees, 8-11, 13
    Kinds, 125-6
Dhana, 30
Dialogues, 262-6
Dîkshit, Bhagîratha Prasād, 78
Divine will, 141-4, 151
Dō Sau Bāwan Vaiṣṇavōṅ Kî Vārtā, 51, 72, 74
Dōhāvalî, 3, 71, 84, 85, 87, 88, 94, 95, 97, 101, 218, 259, 278, 280
Donne, 281
Dual citizenship, 36, 58
Dwaitādwaita, 33
Dwivedî, Hazārî Prasād, 233
Dwivedî, Rāmgulām, 64, 66
Dwivedî, Sudhākar, 77

Egoism, 9, 13, 131, 133
Ekanātha, 54

Eliot, T.S., 118, 267, 297
Elizabeth, Queen, 42
Emotions, 50, 196-218, 234-5, 284, 304
Engles, 254-5
Entertainment, 210-11
Epidemics, 89-90, 92, 181
Equality, 11, 16, 34
Exertion feeling, 216-17

Faizî, Sheikh, 42-3, 44
Famines, 181, 182
Family relations, 19-20, 148, 154
Fantastic images, 213-15
Farquhar, J.N., 121
Fatalism, 141, 142-3
Feudalism, 161-2, 165, 307
Finkelstein, Sydney, 257
Fîrōz Tughlaq, 33, 34
Friendship, 172-3, 284

Games and sports, 61-2
Gāndhî, M.K., 234, 282
Gangā Rām, 85, 86
Garîbdāsa, 83
General ethics, 150-1
Gēsû Darāz, Sheikh, 38
Ghaṭa Rāmāyaṇa, 67
Ghazalî, 45
Gibbon, 120
Gîtāvalî, 3, 71, 94, 95, 97, 100-1, 164, 196, 258, 259, 278
Gîta-Govinda, 50
God, The
  Formless, 128, 129
  Forms, 129, 130-1, 186
  Personification, 127, 307
God's hierarchy, 14-15
Goethe, 297, 298
Gopāladāsa, 83
Gōsāîṅcharita, 64
Gray, 52
Greaves, 228
Grierson, George, 1, 64, 77, 83, 119, 244, 295, 296
Growse, F.S., 5, 117, 120, 121, 295
Gupta, Mātā Prasād, 94, 95

Habbah Khātûn, 44
Hāfiz, Poet, 50
Hājîpur, 66
Hamîm, Mirzā, 58
Hanuman nāṭaka, 289, 292
Hari Dāsa, 53
Harṣa, 31, 32
Hasan, Muhibbul, 44
Haṭha Yōga, 41
Hayātî, Mullāh, 43
Hill, D.W.P., 117, 286
Hindû festivals, 52, 59, 61
Hiriyanna, M., 122
Homer, 281, 283, 288-292, 295, 297, 298, 299
Humility, 217-18
Humāyûṅ, 36, 42, 56, 57
Humour, 210

Iliad, 283, 289, 296
Incarnation, 113, 129, 188, 190
Individual ethics, 104-1
Inheritance, 20
Inter-religious marriages, 59
Islām Shāh, 56

Jafar Bēg Qazvînî, 46
Jagannāthadāsa, 83
Jahāṅgîr, 92
Jahāṅgîr Jas Chandrikā, 43
Jain, Nirmalā, 273
Jainism, 30, 31
Jāisî, Malik Muhammad, 41, 47, 59, 258
Jakobson, 271
Jānakî Maṅgala, 94, 95, 97, 164, 258, 302
Jawāhir Khamsa, 40
Jaya Krishna Dāsa, 91
Jayadēva, 50
Jaziā tax, 33, 58
Joint family, 154

Judaism, 129

Kabîra, 30, 34-5, 47, 65, 122, 156, 246, 274, 293, 296
Kākabhushunḍi, 8, 9, 113, 137, 137, 264
Kalîd Makhzan, 40
Kālidāsa, 4, 68, 101, 153, 154-5, 157, 159, 194, 284-6, 287, 292
Kaliyuga, 12, 17, 48, 52, 62, 99, 129, 130, 136, 165, 182, 284
Kālrā, Ashōk, 28n
Kāmarān, 56
Kanzul Tauhîd, 40
Kapûr, Sheikh, 41
Karma law, 15-16, 106, 107, 137-8, 140, 151
Kāshirāja, 64
Kauṭilya, 227
Kautsky, Minna, 254
Kavitāvalî, 3, 4, 65, 66, 71, 77, 79, 80, 85, 87, 88, 89, 94, 97, 160, 161, 163, 164, 165, 168, 196, 211, 259, 278
  Composition date, 99
Kēshava Dāsa, 43, 301, 302
Key, F. E., 121
Khusrau, Amîr, 43
King
  Duties, 148, 149-50
  Dwellings, 179
  Responsibilities, 19
Knight, G. Wilson, 288
Krishṇa, Lord, 2, 15, 39, 45, 127, 187, 190, 215, 270
Krishṇa bhakti, 48, 49-50, 51, 54-5
Krishṇa-Gîtāvalî, 94, 95, 97, 101, 258, 259, 278
Kshatriyas, 176-7
Kumbhanadāsa, 40
Kutaban, 258

Lakshmîdāsa, 83
Lamb, Charles, 5
Lane-Poole, Stanley, 57
Lenin, 254, 255
Lōna Karana, Rājā, 46
Lotze, Rudolph Hermann, 120
Love sentiments, 234-5
  First sight, 192-3

Macdonnel, A.A., 119, 283
Mādhavānanda, 83
Mādhawa, 32
Mādhurya-Bhāva, 54
Mahābhārata, 48, 153, 226, 237, 270, 283
Mahmûd Lodî, 60
Mahāvîra, Lord, 34
Mahdawî sect, 31, 37
Mahilābād manuscript, 3
Majûbs, 40-1
Mān Singh, Rājā, 40
Mānasamayanka, 63
Manōhara, Mirzā, 46
Manusmriti, 148
Maritain, 258
Matirām, 302
Māyā, 7-9, 111-12, 113, 128, 136, 140, 142, 144, 145, 151, 189
Mēgh, Ramēsh Kuntal, 159
Megha Bhagata, 270
Milton, John, 3, 278-9
Mîra Bāî, 38, 54, 246
Mishra, Mandana, 113
Misra, Vishwanāth, 94
Misrabandhus, 79
Monism, 6, 7-8, 11-12, 119, 122, 127
Moral values, 142-3, 151, 305-7, 308
Mōrōpant, 87
Mrigāvatî, 258
Moghul painting, 52
Moghuls
  Social and religious conditions, 29-62
Muhammad Abdullā, Sayyid, 31
Muhammad-al-Husainî, 39

Muhammad Ghaus, Sheikh, 40
Muhammad Hasan, Sheikh, 40
Muhammad Jaunpurî, Sayyid, 37
Muhammad Malādeh, Sheikh, 39
Muînuddîn Chishtî, Sheikh, 30
Mujeeb, Prof., 38, 39
Mûla Gōsāîṅcharita, 63, 90, 94
Mural art, 52
Music, 53
Muslim festivals, 59, 61
Muslim jurisprudence, 37

Nābhādāsa, 83, 86, 282, 295
Nāgarî Prachāriṇi Sabhā, 94
Nagēndra, Prof., 219, 295, 300
Nala Damayantî, 43
Nāma-Japa, 186
Nānaka, 30, 35, 47, 56
Nandadāsa, 51, 72, 74
Nārada, 10
Narahari Dāsa, 82, 83
Narsî Mehtā, 54
Nasāir, 40
Nasîruddin Chishtî, Sheikh, 38
Neech concept, 174
Nibelungenlied, 296-7
Nimbārka, 30, 32
Nirguṇa vāda, 6, 35, 47, 50-1, 109-10, 111, 122, 123, 128, 131, 186, 187
Nizāmuddîn Auliyā, 30
Nizāmuddîn Chishtî, 38
Non-violence, 13, 14
Nûrî, Mullāh, 43

Padma Purāṇa, 235
Padmākara, 302
Padmāvata, 258
Padminî, 41
Paintings, 52, 53
Pairavî, 45
Panchāyatanāmā, 64
Pāṇḍēy, Chandrabali, 65
Pāṇḍēya, Ayōdhyā Prasād, 70, 76
Pāṇḍēya, Mahādēv, 70
Pāṇḍēya, R.C., 103
Paradise Lost, 299
Pārvatî Maṅgala, 94, 95, 97, 101, 164, 167, 258, 278, 302
Parîkshita, Rājā, 50
Pārsîs, 36, 59, 60
Pathos, 206-8, 284
Peasant society, 166-7
Petrarch, 283
Physical love, 38, 51
Pilgrim tax, 58
Pîpā, 293
Pîrak, Sheikh, 41
Piyārāh, Sheikh, 38
Poetry
  Conception, 189-90
  Elements, 277
  Medieval period, 153-4
  Objects, 21-2, 24, 189, 228, 229, 274-5
  Social role, 25
  Test, 26
  Sources, 23
Poet's freedom, 24
Political ethics, 149-50
Polytheism, 119
Pratāpbhānu, King, 142
Prediction, 143
Pride, 9, 13, 133
Prithvîrāja Rāsō, 260
Priyādāsa, 84
Punishment, 147-8
Purāṇas, 2, 43, 232, 237, 270, 287, 292
  Characteristics, 227
Pûrva Mîmāmsā, 107
Puṣṭi-Mārga, 54

Qādirî order, 39-40

Rāghavānanda, 84
Raidāsa, 293
Rājāpur, 66-71
Rājāpur manuscript, 2, 3
Rājashēkhara, 162
Rāma, Lord
  As Brahman, 185-9
  As incarnation, 48, 113, 188, 190, 243

As king, 194
As Personal god, 187-8
As Puruşōttama, 185, 189-95, 288
Moral personality, 192
Prowess, 191-2
Weaknesses, 195
Rāma Muktāvalî, 63
Rāma-nāma, 115-16, 136, 243, 250, 270
Rāmabōlā, 85, 160
Rāmacharitamānasa
Aesthetic quality, 242-4
As an epic, 221, 226-44
As devotional poem, 221, 225
Composition date, 2, 64, 97-9
Female characters, 241-2
Hero's greatness, 238-42
Importance, 1-2, 119
Life portrayal, 235-6
Magnitude and profundity, 233-5
Manuscript copies, 2-3
Moral qualities, 21-2
Objectives, 229-31
Organic metaphor, 164
Plot, 236-8
Poetic form, 226-8
Popularity, 1, 251-2, 271-2
Preface, 4
Principal sentiments, 219-25
Religious philosophy, 121-2
Rhetoric devices, 251-72
Sources, 8, 117-18, 288
Style, 3, 242
Tulasî's birth-place reference, 67-8
Tulasî's guru's reference, 81-2
Rāmāgyāprashna, 85, 86, 94, 95, 101
Composition date, 96
Rāmalalā Nahchhû, 94, 95, 259, 302, 303
Composition date, 96
Rāmalîlā, 270-1
Rāmānanda, 2. 34, 83, 84, 122, 287, 293
Rāmānuja, 32, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124
Rāmaprasāda, 122
Rāmarājya, 17, 47, 48, 175, 184, 194, 235, 236
Rasakhāna, 54
Rasa-sûtra, 161
Ratnāvalî, 95
Ravidāsa, 30
Razunnāmāh, 52
Reformist movement, 30
Religious intolerance, 33-4
Religious tolerance, 11, 14-15, 37-8, 39, 61, 119-20, 135-6
Renaissance, 30, 35
Renou, Louis, 123
Rhetoric, 251-72
Relation to dialectic, 257
Rigvēda, 19, 148
Ritualistic ceremonies, 34
Rizqullāh Mushtāqî, 39
Rûpamatî, 44

Sādhya-bhakti, 138
Saffiuddîn, Sheikh, 37
Saguṇa bhakti. 45, 48, 51, 108, 109-10, 122, 131, 187
Saguṇa-Nirguṇa relations, 110-11, 112, 114-15, 129
Sagunavali, 259
Saints
Qualities, 14, 177-8
Sakāma bhakti, 126
Saksēnā, Bābûrāma, 48
Saksēnā, Banārsî Prasād, 29
Salîm, Prince, 44
Salîm Chishtî, Sheikh, 53
Samudra Gupta, 57
Sāṅgā, Rāṇā, 60
Saraswatî Bhawan, Kāshî, 64
Sarbhaṅga, 131
Sat Saî, 3, 95
Schiller, 255
Secularism, 54, 55
Self-gratification, 24-5, 208. 229, 274

Sen, Kshtimōhan, 121
Sēṅgar, Shiva Singh, 64, 66
Sentiments, 211-13, 215, 219-25, 277
Shakespeare, William, 5, 98, 118, 255, 281, 287, 297, 293, 299
Shānḍilya, 10
Shankarāchārya, 30, 31, 35, 113, 116, 120, 121, 122, 123, 139
Shāstrî, Rajanî Kānt, 65
Shattārî, order, 40
Shauqî, Mullāh, 43
Shaw, T.E., 289
Shelley, 281
Shēr Shāh, 41, 56, 58
Sherring, 77
Shiāh-Sunnî conflict, 36-7
Shiva, 264
Shōbhā, Sāvitrî Chandra, 169
Shûdras, 12, 17, 161, 307, 308, 309
  Status, 18, 156, 176
Shukla, Rām Bahōrî, 66, 69, 70
Shukla, Rām Chandra, 196, 220, 228, 230, 239, 252, 259, 260
Siddhānta Manjarî, 91
Sikandar Lōdî, 33, 55-6
Singh, Shambhu Nāth, 226
Skandapurāṇa, 82
Smith, Vincent, 57, 62, 296
Social consciousness, 159-68
Social ethics, 148-9
Social hierarchy, 16-18
Social life, 169-84
Social structure
  Part-whole relationship, 18-19
Society
  Classification, 170-8
Sōrōṅ, 70, 71-7
Soul's transmigration, 15-16
Spiritual love, 38, 55
Spiritual music, 39
Srî Rangan, 55
Srivastava, R.N., 251
Sûfism, 30-1, 33, 34, 38-9, 41-3, 45, 47, 49, 50, 51, 54, 61, 161, 304
Suhrāwardî order, 39-40
Sûkarkhēta, 74, 82
Sûradāsa, 50-1, 54, 74, 153, 155, 215, 246, 302, 303
Sursurānanda, 83
Sutîkshṇa, 131

Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 231, 240
Tahmasp Shāh, 56
Tān Sen, 53
Tapniya Upaniṣad, 48
Tārî, 66
Tassy, Garcin de, 64, 66
Tausanî, 46
Tejan, Miyān, 39
Thompson, Francis, 288
Timûr, 30, 52
Tōḍar, 86, 90
Tripāṭhî, Rām Narēsh, 70, 71, 94, 95
Tripāṭhî, Vijayānanda, 229
Tulasî Sāhib of Hāthras, Saint, 65, 67, 69
Tulasîdāsa
  Aesthetic relevance to modern age, 301-5
  Aesthetic sensibility, 196 218, 224-5
  Age, 29-62
  As compared to Dante, 287-8; Homer, 288-92; Kālidāsa, 154-6, 157, 283-6; Milton, 298-9; Vālmîki, 282-3; Virgil, 292-6
  As world poet, 281-99
  Bhakti concept, 125-39
  Biography, 63-93; Birth date, 63-5, 91; Birth place, 65-77, 91—Rājāpur, 66-71, Sōrōṅ, 71-7; Caste and subcaste, 79-81, 91; Early struggles, 79-81, 91; Spiritual preceptor, 81-4, 91; Married life and renunciation, 84, 91; Original name, 84-5; In Chitrakûṭa and Kāshî, 85-6; Friends and well-wishers, 86; Honours, 86-7, 92; Opposition, 87-8, 91; Phy-

sical sufferings, 88, 92; Last phase, 88-90; Death, 90, 92; Gōsāîṅ title, 90-1
Cultural values, 153-8
Emotive appeal, 196-218
Ethics, 140-52
Language, 154, 245-50, 258-9
Message, 267-70
Mind and art, 6-28
Modesty, 4, 217-18
Moral relevance to modern age, 305-7
Nature's knowledge, 5
Philosophy, 6-8, 103-16, 118
Poetic qualities, 3-4, 21-8, 273-80
Poet's role, 161-2
Purpose of writing, 10, 228
Rāma's conception, 185-95
Relevance to modern age, 300-9
Sentimental emotions, 219-25
Social consciousness, 159-68
Social relevance to modern age, 307-9
Social life and concepts as reflected, 169-84
Themes, 165-8
Theology, 117-24
Works, 94-102

Ulēmā, 33, 37
Upādhāya, Gaṇapati, 67
Upādhyāya, Munnîlāl, 67
Upādhyāya family, 69, 71
Upaniṣads, 1, 30, 116, 121, 123, 247, 292, 294
Urfî, 44
Uttararāmacharita, 236

Vairāgya-Sandîpanî, 94, 95, 101
Composition date, 95-6
Vaishyas, 177
Vaiṣṇava cult, 16, 52, 104, 107, 110, 127
Vallabhāchārya, 49-50, 52, 54, 59
Vālmîki, 1, 2, 48, 86, 96, 97, 133, 153, 154, 155, 195, 220, 221, 224, 226, 232, 235, 237, 238, 242, 243, 270, 282-3, 284, 287, 289, 292, 293, 295
Vāman, 162
Vāraha Tîrtha, 82
Varṇa-Ashrama system, 102, 148-9, 155-6, 170-2, 175-7, 183
Vēdānta, 41, 107, 120, 156
Vēdāntasāra, 120
Vedas, 1, 34, 175, 232, 282, 294, 298
Vermā, Jagan Mōhan, 63
Vermā, Rāmkumār, 288
Vidyāpati, 50, 246
Village life, 178, 181-3
Vinayapatrikā, 9, 14, 65, 68, 71, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 87, 88, 94, 95, 97, 101-2, 110, 111, 148, 160, 164, 168, 217, 246, 259, 302, 303, 304, 307
Virgil, 281, 283, 292-6, 298, 299
Virtues and vices, 144-8, 152, 158
Cardinal virtues, 145-6
Leading vices, 146
Nature, 144-5
Source, 144
Virtue practice, 146-7
Vishiṣṭādwaita, 33, 122, 127, 128
Viṭṭhalanātha, 51
Vivaratavāda, 111

Wahdatul Shuhûd, 33, 50
Wahdatul Wajûd, 33, 50
Wilson, 64, 83
Women
Classification, 149
Duties, 148-9
Family position, 19-20
Objectionable remarks, 308
Status, 17, 18, 156, 161, 174-5, 307
Wood, Ernest, 296
Word-picture, 277-8

Yājnavalkya, 142, 264
Yûnus, Sheikh, 39
Yûsuf Shāh, 44

Zaehner, R.C., 122
Zainal Abidin, 59
Zamāir, 40
Zola, 255

40
30